



## CITY OF CORNELIA POLICE DEPARTMENT



### PRESS RELEASE

On 05-17-2022, Officer Eric Palmer, was reporting for his night shift rotation with the Cornelia Police Department. While traveling south bound on Georgia Hwy 105/ Cannon Bridge Road, Officer Palmer received a text message on his phone. As he looked down to see who was texting him, the vehicle in front of him (a Gold Toyota 4 Runner with 2 occupants) had stopped for another vehicle that was turning. Due to the distraction of the phone, his reaction time was impeded which resulted in Officer Palmer striking the gold Toyota 4 Runner in the rear. The accident occurred in area of Georgia Hwy 105/Cannon Bridge Road and Sweetbriar Drive. At 5:29 pm Officer Palmer radioed to dispatch that he was involved in an accident and gave the location. At 5:30pm Officer Palmer then radioed that he was getting out of his vehicle to check on the occupants of the Gold 4 Runner. At 5:37pm, Officer Palmer radioed that the occupants of the Gold 4 Runner said they were "Ok". The Georgia State Patrol was requested to work the accident, however Habersham County Sheriff's Office Deputy Brian Collins #118 responded to investigate the accident due to the Georgia State Patrol working a wreck in Stephens County, of which he arrived on scene at 5:45pm. Habersham County EMS also respond and arrived on scene at 6:12pm and checked on the occupants of the Gold 4 Runner and Officer Palmer as well as. At 6:23pm Habersham EMS reported to dispatch that all persons involved refused medical treatment and at that they (Habersham County EMS) were back in service.

The investigation into the wreck is being handled by the Habersham County Sheriff's Office while the internal investigation is being handled by Cornelia Police Departments, Office of Professional Standards. As of this morning 05-18-2022, the internal investigation shows that Officer Palmer violated state law and departmental policy for texting and driving. As a result, Officer Palmer has received internal disciplinary action and will also be required to attend training regarding distracted driving. At 2:00pm today, 05-18-2022, Deputy Brian Collins viewed the in-car camera footage from Officer Palmers patrol vehicle and as a result Officer Palmer was issued a citation for violation of OCGA 40-6-241.2, Distracted Driving/Hands Free.

We are very thankful for the fact that no one was seriously injured in this incident. We would like to take this opportunity to point out that all though officers are held to a higher standard, and we receive countless hours in driver training, we are still in fact human. We want this accident to be lesson to all public safety and the motoring public that this can happen to anyone. Because a lot of us have never been in a wreck because of distracted driving, this can give us a false sense of security that we are in control. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, **you are 24 times more likely to be involved in an accident while driving distracted.** As school is letting out soon and summer vacations and activities begin, the vehicular traffic in our area is about to double. Let's work together and put the phones, hamburgers, fancy coffee and make up down and lets all travel safer and get where we are going.