

Idiom by Lon Yan

居高臨下

ju1 gao1 lin2 xia4

Texting while driving is dangerous. But more and more drivers are doing just that.

The best way to stop people from text-and-drive is to punish them heavily, yet catching them is not easy as the drivers usually put the phone on their lap.

An officer from Quebec traffic control explained, "We see a lot of people who have a cellphone at the wheel, to talk or text, on their thigh. It's not the sort of thing we can see when we're in a patrol vehicle."

So the police send officers on a bus, observe from above, and alert patrol cars behind to catch the offenders. This method proved to be quite effective, and more cities in Canada are using it. The essence of the new tactic can be described by the idiom "居高臨下" (*ju1 gao1 lin2 xia4*).

"居" (*ju1*) means "to live at," "situated at," "to be in a certain position," "高" (*gao1*) "tall," "high," "height," "high place," "臨" (*lin2*) "near," "at," "to arrive at," "to descend upon," and "下" (*xia4*) "below," "under," "down." Literally, "居高臨下" (*ju1 gao1 lin2 xia4*) is "to descend to below from a high point."

The idiom means "to occupy a commanding position," "to occupy a high position and descend down," "to have a commanding view from a vantage ground."

The expression "居高不下" (*ju1 gao1 bu2 xia4*) looks similar but has a different meaning. It means "staying high and not coming down." It describes things like prices or rates, like local home prices which has been staying high.

Terms containing the character "臨" (*lin2*) include:

臨時 (*lin2 shi2*) – temporary; provisional

臨時工 (*lin2 shi2 gong1*) – temporary work

臨床 (*lin2 chuang2*) – clinical

臨行 (*lin2 xing*) – on leaving; on the point of departure