

SFPD Joins National Campaign to End Distracted Driving

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SAN FRANCISCO, CA– Distracted driving is such an important safety issue that April is recognized as National Distracted Driving Awareness Month. In California, Police, Sheriff and CHP officials are joining the Office of Traffic Safety, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), and the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), as well as law enforcement throughout the country, working together to focus on education as well as enforcement.

The purpose of the campaign is to raise awareness about the dangers of distracted driving in an attempt to change behavior and save lives, not just in April but also year-round. San Francisco Police Department will join statewide enforcement campaigns on April 7th and 20th, “zero tolerance days,” when all agencies will be especially vigilant for distracted drivers. Although the purpose of the campaign is not to write as many citations as possible, sometimes citations are necessary for drivers to understand the importance of focusing on their driving.

Distracted driving continues to be a problem, especially as the use of Smartphones increase. Although such crashes are often difficult to prove, California had at least 84 fatal distracted driving collisions in 2013, 85 in 2014 and 67 in 2015, with the actual number of cases likely higher. The number of injury collisions for the same three-year period shows an increase: 10,078 in 2013; 10,463 in 2014, and 11,023 in 2015. NHTSA data for 2014 show nationwide, 3,179 people died in distracted driving collisions, which is 10 per cent of all crash fatalities. An additional 431,000 people, or 18 per cent, were injured in motor vehicle collisions involving distracted drivers.

“As we rely on our cell phones more and more in our everyday lives, we seem to be kidding ourselves in thinking that they don’t affect our driving,” said OTS Director Rhonda Craft. “Crashes are up. The scientific evidence is solid. The dangers are real, and they apply to all of us. We need to silence the distractions.”

The problem of distracted driving is significant, and no surprise to drivers day in and day out. The Department Of Transportation notes that at any given moment, during daylight hours, more than 660,000 vehicles are being driven by someone using a hand-held cellphone.

NHTSA will conduct a television campaign in April with the message “U Drive. U Text. U Pay.” OTS will produce public service announcements and conduct a social media campaign urging drivers to “Silence the

Distraction.”

WHAT IS DISTRACTED DRIVING?

Distracted driving is any activity that could divert a person's attention away from the primary task of driving. All distractions endanger driver, passenger, and bystander safety. These types of distractions include:

- Texting
- Using a cellphone or smartphone
- Eating and drinking
- Talking to passengers
- Grooming
- Reading, including maps
- Using a navigation system
- Watching a video
- Adjusting a radio, CD player, or MP3 player

But, because text messaging requires visual, manual, and cognitive attention from the driver, it is by far the most alarming distraction.

The California Office of Traffic Safety, Police, Sheriff and the CHP reminds everyone that best way to end distracted driving is to educate all Americans about the danger it poses.

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