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News from: Oakland Police Department



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The Oakland Police Department Joins National Campaign To End Distracted Driving

Oakland, CA — Distracted driving is such an important safety issue that April is recognized as National Distracted Driving Awareness Month. In California, local police, sheriff and CHP officials are joining the Office of Traffic Safety (OTS), the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), and the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), as well as law enforcement throughout the country in a national campaign to end distracted driving through 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. The Oakland Police Department will join statewide enforcement campaigns on April 7 and 20, “zero tolerance days,” when all agencies will be especially vigilant for distracted drivers. Although writing as many citations as possible is not the purpose of the campaign, sometimes citations are necessary for drivers to understand the importance of focusing on their driving.

Distracted driving continues to be a problem, especially as use of Smartphones increases.

Fatalities

Although it can often be difficult to prove that a crash was caused by distracted driving, California had at least 84 fatal distracted driving collisions in 2013, 85 in 2014, and 67 in 2015. Actual numbers of cases are likely higher. NHTSA data for 2014 show that nationwide, 3,179 people died in distracted driving collisions, 10 per cent of all crash fatalities.

Injuries

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 that nationwide, 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: 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. 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 dangerous distraction.

The Oakland Police Department joins OTS, NHTSA, NTSB, the Alameda County Sheriff’s Office, other local police agencies, and the CHP in reminding everyone that best way to end distracted driving is to educate all Americans about the danger it poses. As Oakland Chief of Police Sean Whent has put it, “The collective goal with this month-long campaign is to change the behavior of all drivers. That change begins with education.”

For more information, please contact the Media Relations Office at 510-238-7230 or opdmedia@oaklandnet.com.

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