



City of
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Working Together To Stop Distracted Driving

Oakland, CA – April is recognized as National Distracted Driving Awareness Month. In California, the Office of Traffic Safety, the California Highway Patrol, local law enforcement, and community partners are working together to make our roads safer by highlighting the dangers of being distracted while driving. Cell phones in particular are known to distract drivers. “Law enforcement would rather see everyone off their cell phones than hand out a lot of tickets,” said Rhonda Craft, director of the Office of Traffic Safety. “Take care of calling, texting, setting your GPS and everything else before you hit the street.”

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reports that 3,477 people were killed in motor vehicle collisions involving distracted drivers in 2015 – nine percent more than the year before. An estimated 391,000 were injured. Lawmakers agree that distracted driving continues to be a growing problem among California's motorists. Assembly Bill 1785 went into effect on January 1, requiring all drivers in California to keep cell phones out of their hands while operating motor vehicles.

Under the new law, a driver may not activate or deactivate a cell phone or wireless communication device feature or function by swiping or tapping its screen unless it is properly mounted. Doing so while holding the device in your hand is against the law. Specific information on the new law can be found at www.ots.ca.gov.

This month, the Office of Traffic Safety will begin a new public awareness campaign throughout the state, emphasizing how the new law makes virtually all hand-held cell phone activity illegal – talking, texting, and using apps. The campaign aims to end distracted driving by raising awareness about its associated dangers. The goal is to change motorist behaviors and save lives, not just in the month of April but year-round.

The Oakland Police Department will join other law enforcement agencies throughout the state to provide educational experiences as well as zero tolerance enforcement efforts to discourage distracted driving. Again, saving lives is the goal, but sometimes citations are necessary for motorists to better understand the importance of driving distraction free.

The Oakland Police Department is using grant-funded resources to deploy extra traffic officers in city locations with the highest numbers of traffic collisions. Violators will be stopped and cited; fines are set at \$162 for first-time offenders.

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