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## Grad Night is a Time for Celebrating, Not Crashing

SACRAMENTO, CA – Another school year has come and gone, and, for many students, graduation marks the end of their high school or college careers. Although the day should be one filled with fun and celebrations, it only takes one bad decision behind the wheel to ruin any future plans. As graduates and their families prepare to celebrate new beginnings, the California Office of Traffic Safety would like to remind you that taking extra precautions on graduation night is key to keeping this year's graduating class as safe as possible.

“Graduation night often poses many safety hazards for new graduates behind the wheel,” said OTS Director Rhonda Craft. “It’s easy to get caught up in the excitement of the day, but speeding, driving while intoxicated or under the influence of drugs, while distracted, or without seatbelts are all behaviors that can instantly turn a fun celebration into a tragedy.”

Young drivers are particularly susceptible to crashes. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, there were 1,875 young drivers who died in motor vehicle crashes, in 2012, along with 184,000 injured. Traffic collisions is the leading cause of death among 15-20 year olds.

To help teens stay safe while driving, the State of California has zero-tolerance policies in place for minors regarding impaired driving or behind-the-wheel cell phone use. For anyone under 21, there is no legal Blood Alcohol Content (BAC) limit; any alcohol present in the system is illegal and carries heavy consequences. In addition, drivers under 18 are prohibited from any use of mobile devices.

“It’s important for graduates and all young people to remember safe driving rules so that they can get themselves and their passengers to and from fun events,” adds Craft. “Graduation day is such an accomplishment for family and students alike and every precaution possible should be taken to ensure that it’s a day that is remembered fondly.”

Plans for the big day may be well underway, but there is still time to add these safe driving tips from OTS to ensure a happy and safe celebration:

1. **Be responsible.** Never, under any circumstance, let someone who’s been drinking be a driver. Take the initiative to arrange a sober ride home. A taxi, family members or sober friends are all safe alternatives
2. **Buckle up.** Always wear a seat belt and make sure everyone else in the car does, too

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3. **Silence your cell phones, please.** When driving, pay attention to the road and silence your cell phone. Ask passengers to avoid distracting the driver, and concentrate on getting safely to and from the destination
4. **Be a good host.** If you're hosting a graduation party for the new grad, ensure that all your guests designate a sober driver in advance, or arrange for alternative transportation to ensure they get home safely. Make sure to have plenty of non-alcoholic beverages and food on hand for your guests. For delicious, non-alcoholic drink recipes, visit OTS on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/CaliforniaOTS](https://www.facebook.com/CaliforniaOTS) and click on the DDrink albums.

Keep graduation night a happy memory for everyone by avoiding distracted driving behaviors, reckless driving and driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Stay connected with OTS via: [www.ots.ca.gov](http://www.ots.ca.gov), [https://twitter.com/ots\\_ca](https://twitter.com/ots_ca) and [www.facebook.com/CaliforniaOTS](https://www.facebook.com/CaliforniaOTS)

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