



it's
NOT
worth
it!



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**57,000 Distracted Driving Month Tickets in April;
Cell Phone Usage Rate Down**

(Sacramento, CA) – More than 57,000 drivers were ticketed for handheld cell phone talking or texting during April's Distracted Driving Awareness Month, according to the California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) and the California Highway Patrol (CHP). The citations written by CHP officers as well as over 250 local law enforcement agencies across the state match the number handed to drivers in last year's April campaign. The monthly number of cell phone tickets outside of this special high visibility enforcement averages 36,000 violations. Over 3,500 citations were handed out for other types of distracted driving violations.

The Office of Traffic Safety also announced today that the percentage of drivers actively using cell phones at any one time in the state dropped from 10.8 percent in 2012 to 7.4 percent in 2013, nearly returning to the baseline 2011 total of 7.3 percent. The largest drop, 33 percent, was from those holding a cell phone to their ear. The information was contained in the third annual cell phone observational survey conducted in March by OTS through the UC Berkeley Safe Transportation Research and Education Center. The results are likely the low-end indicators due to the short, limited view observation of whether a driver was using a phone, especially for texting.

"We are very encouraged to see the usage figures decline, especially after the increase last year," said OTS Director Christopher J. Murphy. "But any number is too high, since any usage of cell phones while driving takes away too much of our brain's ability to react to what's happening on the road, not to mention when our hands or eyes are disengaged also."

Law enforcement agencies from across the state joined in the high visibility enforcement efforts of the April campaign. Officers have been witness to the ever increasing number of crashes in recent years due to cell phone use and other distracted driving. Participating agencies came together for two area-wide concentrated enforcement days during the month as well as smaller city-wide enforcement days.

"The month of April is behind us, however, distracted driving awareness education and enforcement continues for law enforcement statewide," said CHP Commissioner Joe Farrow. "Inattention while driving is a dangerous behavior with potentially deadly consequences. Motorists, especially parents with impressionable children in the vehicle, are strongly encouraged to practice safe, legal driving behaviors. Lives depend on it."

(more)

Over and above the enforcement efforts, the "It's Not Worth It!" campaign continued to make drivers and the public aware of the dangers of distracted driving, as well as the high cost of tickets, through Caltrans changeable message signs over highways, DMV messaging in field offices, plus internet, social media and other outreach. Costs for violating the cell phone laws start at \$162 for the first offense and \$285 for subsequent offenses. Other violations for actions that can be classified as distracted driving can range even higher. More important are the hundreds killed and thousands seriously injured every year due to drivers thinking they can operate a vehicle safely while engrossed in talking or texting on a cell phone.

Following a few uncomplicated steps would go a long way in keeping you safe from distracted driving:

- Put your cell phone out of reach or turn it off when you get in the car so you won't be tempted to use it.
- Mention on your outgoing voicemail message that you can't answer because you might be driving.
- Don't call or text anyone when there is a good chance that they may be driving.
- If you must call or text, pull into a parking space. The extra couple of minutes are worth it.
- The ability to safely multi-task while driving is myth. Cell phone use actually diminishes the brain's ability to drive safely.
- Never check Facebook, run an app, read or otherwise allow your full attention to leave the task of safely driving.

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