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**PRESS RELEASE**

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**Make Prom Safe and Fun**

Spring is in full swing and for teenagers everywhere, that means preparations for prom are underway. This prom season, the California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) is reminding all students and parents that safety behind the wheel is especially important on prom night. Lifelong memories of prom night should be of good times, not tragedy. Young drivers, especially new teen drivers, are particularly susceptible to crashes; based on miles driven, the fatality rate for drivers aged 16 to 19 is four times higher than for older, more experienced drivers. The National Young Driver Survey also states that 20 percent of eleventh grade drivers reported at least one crash over the past year.

“Studies show that most incidents involving young drivers stem from inexperience, rather than deliberately risky behavior. Teens simply don’t have the time behind the wheel to know how to respond quickly to outside dangers,” said OTS Director Christopher J. Murphy. “Add on prom night with possible underage drinking, lack of using seat belts, cell phones, and a bunch of teens in one car increases these hazards for many and puts them at greater risk.”

California has a zero-tolerance policy for minors when it comes to impaired driving or cell phone use. For anyone under 21, there is no legal Blood Alcohol Content 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.

In order to make sure prom is a safe and fun evening, OTS recommends taking the following safety tips into consideration when planning prom night:

- Never, under any circumstances, let someone who’s been drinking be a driver. Take the initiative and arrange a sober ride home or have them sleep at a safe place for the night. Parents, a taxi, or sober friends are all safe alternatives.
- Always wear a seatbelt and make sure everyone else in the car does, too.
- When driving, pay attention to the road. Silence cell phones, ask passengers to avoid distracting the driver, and concentrate on getting safely to and from the destination.
- Bring an extra pair of comfortable shoes to use while driving to avoid driving in heels or bulky dress shoes.

Speeding, reckless driving, driving while intoxicated or under the influence of drugs, while distracted, or without seatbelts are all behaviors that can instantly turn a fun spring celebration into a tragedy. Following these tips can help to ensure that all prom goers have a safe and memorable prom night.

For more information on all OTS efforts and other safe driving tips, log on to [www.ots.ca.gov](http://www.ots.ca.gov). You can also join on us on Twitter at: [http://twitter.com/#!/OTS\\_CA](http://twitter.com/#!/OTS_CA) or “like” us at [www.facebook.com/CaliforniaOTS](http://www.facebook.com/CaliforniaOTS)

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