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OTS offers tips to stay safe during Thanksgiving holiday

Preparedness is key during busy travel season

Traveling for the Thanksgiving holiday? You are not alone. This week, AAA estimates 48.5 million Americans will hit the road and travel more than 50 miles for Thanksgiving get-togethers, leading to more traffic on roadways across the country.

The California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) is encouraging everyone to be extra alert and cautious so that everyone can get where they need to go safely and enjoy the Thanksgiving holiday.

"The Thanksgiving holiday is one of the busiest travel times of the year," OTS Director Rhonda Craft said. "The majority of people will be traveling by car, and with the first significant rain and snow of the season coming to California, it is crucial for everyone to make sure their car is road ready."

To help everyone stay safe this Thanksgiving, the OTS offers the following tips:

- Get your battery checked. Your brakes, windshield wipers, defroster, heater and lights should also be in working order.
- Make sure your tires, including the spare, are properly inflated and the treads in good condition. If you are headed to higher elevations, always bring chains.
- When it is raining, slow down and leave more distance between you and the next car to allow extra time to stop. Stopping distances can double in rain and triple in snow.
- Turn on your headlights in rainy conditions. Use low beams in fog or snow.
- Pack an emergency kit. Every vehicle should have a kit with a phone charger, flashlight, first aid kit, tire pressure gauge, tool kit, jumper cables, emergency flares or reflectors, water and snacks.
- Minimize distractions and turn off or silence your cell phone.
- Check road conditions using Caltrans QuickMap or on the QuickMap app.

Lastly, make sure you get enough sleep and never drive under the influence of alcohol or drugs. The OTS reminds everyone that "DUI Doesn't Just Mean Booze." Over-the-counter medications, prescription drugs and marijuana can be impairing, especially in combination with alcohol or other drugs.

"We all want a Thanksgiving holiday to remember," Craft said. "Let's plan ahead, make smart decisions on the road, and have a good time with family and friends."