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## California Drivers Encouraged to ‘Silence’ the Distractions

### *April is Distracted Driving Awareness Month*

Sacramento, Calif. – California drivers continue to shift their focus away from the road and onto their phones, despite the risks associated with multitasking behind the wheel.

April is Distracted Driving [Awareness Month](#), and the California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS), the California Highway Patrol (CHP) and Impact Teen Drivers (ITD) will be working together throughout the month to educate drivers on the importance of traveling free of distractions, as well as cracking down on drivers who violate the state’s hands-free cell phone law.

“Cell phones are working against us in the fight against distracted driving,” OTS Director Rhonda Craft said. “The hope is that a combination of education and enforcement will drive people to change bad behaviors for the better.”

According to preliminary data from the CHP, 66 people were killed and more than 6,500 injured in 2017 from distracted driving related crashes. In 2018, the CHP issued more than 109,000 citations for violations of the hands-free cell phone laws.

On April 4 and April 19, the CHP will conduct a statewide enforcement effort to discourage distracted driving.

“Through a combination of high visibility enforcement efforts, a focused education campaign, and cooperation from the motoring public, preliminary data shows the number of inattentive drivers involved in crashes is on the decline,” said CHP Commissioner Warren Stanley. “Ultimately, the goal is to increase voluntary compliance with the law, while keeping people safe on the road.”

A 2018 [observational study](#) by the OTS on driver cell phone use found that approximately 4.5 percent of drivers were seen using a cell phone, a nearly 27 percent increase from 2017, but down from 2016, when 7.6 percent of drivers were observed using a cell phone.

“Clearly, there’s more work to be done to curb distracted driving,” Craft said. “The observational survey gives us an idea on where we stand and that we still have our work cut out for us.”

Impact Teen Drivers partners with traffic safety organizations across the state to educate California’s newest drivers on the dangers and consequences of reckless and distracted driving. Driver distraction is the primary cause of crashes involving teen drivers.

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“Each year, we could fill eight large yellow school buses with the number of teens we lose to preventable car crashes in California alone,” Impact Teen Drivers Executive Director Dr. Kelly Browning said. “The first week of April is also California Teen Safe Driving Week, and it’s a good time to remind everyone that we need to always keep two hands on the wheel, two eyes on the road, and most importantly keep our mind focused on our driving. Remember to be an alert and engaged passenger at all times – after all, fifty percent of the teen driving fatalities last year were passengers being driven by another teen driver.”

Distracted driving laws have been on the books since 2008. The CHP and the OTS remind drivers that under the 2017 hands-free [cell phone law](#), drivers are not allowed to hold a wireless telephone or electronic wireless communications device while driving a motor vehicle.

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