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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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OPEN YOUR EYES TO THE DANGERS OF DISTRACTED DRIVING

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – Any time drivers take their eyes off the road to look at or use a phone, they are driving blind. For example, looking down at a cell phone to read a text takes a driver’s eyes off the road for an average of five seconds - at 55 mph, that is the equivalent of driving the length of a 300-foot football field without looking.

As part of April’s Distracted Driving Awareness Month, the California Highway Patrol (CHP), California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS), and Impact Teen Drivers (ITD) are working together to increase education and enforcement efforts to raise awareness about the dangers of distracted driving.

Many distractions interfere with safe driving, but cell phones continue to be the most common distraction.

“Nothing on your phone is worth endangering a life when you drive,” said CHP Commissioner Amanda Ray. “Your primary focus should always be on the road and the task of driving your vehicle safely.”

In 2021, the CHP issued more than 55,800 citations for distracted driving. According to preliminary data compiled in the Statewide Integrated Traffic Records System, that same year driver inattention resulted in over 13,000 crashes. Sadly, at least 56 distracted drivers were involved in fatal crashes and nearly 6,300 other distracted drivers were involved in injury crashes throughout California.

“Silence your phone and put it away while driving,” OTS Director Barbara Rooney said. “It is a simple, yet significant action that keeps yourself and others on the road safe.”

While officers enforce distracted driving and other violations daily, on April 7 and 20, they will pay close attention to citing distracted drivers caught engaging in this dangerous driving behavior as part of statewide enforcement campaigns. From April 11-24, the OTS will run a new education campaign encouraging drivers to stay off the phone and ditch the distractions.

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Car crashes are the number one killer of teens, and the monthlong traffic safety campaign will include a special emphasis during *California Teen Safe Driving Week*, April 4-10, on educating the state’s newest drivers about the dangers of reckless and distracted driving.

“Remember to be the driver you want your kids to be—eyes on the road, hands on the wheel, and your mind focused on the drive,” said ITD Executive Director Kelly Browning. “Parents, you are the number one influencer of your kids’ driving attitudes and behaviors.”

With grant funding provided by OTS, the CHP has partnered with ITD, a Sacramento-based nonprofit, to help spread the message of safe, distraction-free driving. The ITD program uses a multifaceted approach to deliver evidence-based education to teens and parents across the nation.

The mission of the CHP is to provide the highest level of Safety, Service, and Security.

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