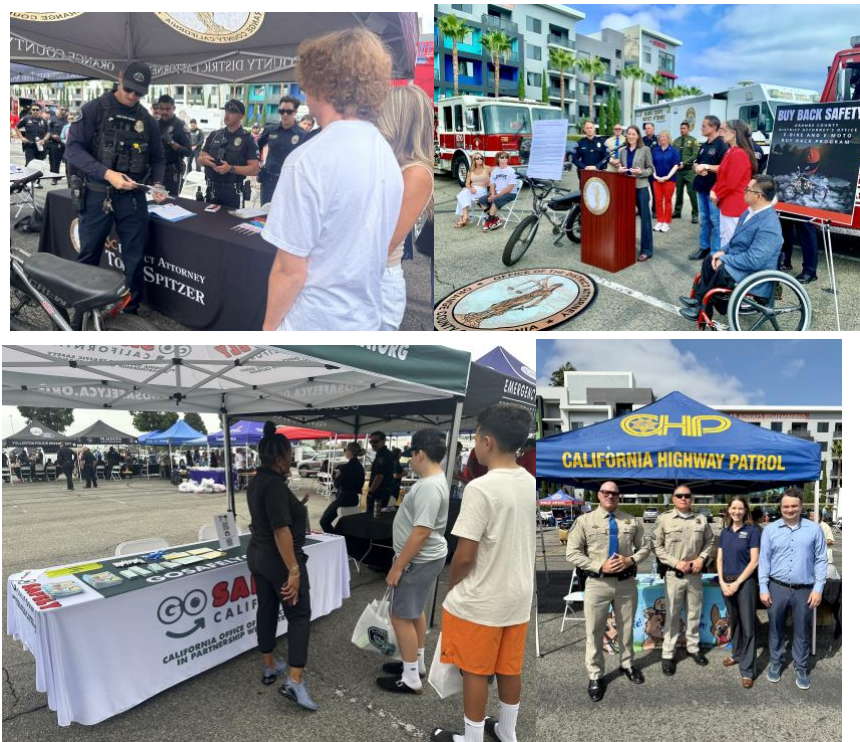




OTS TRACKS: September 2026

In recognition of California Pedestrian Safety Month, September's issue highlights how communities are addressing the safe and responsible use of e-devices through rider and parent/guardian education and other strategies. This edition also explores ways communities supported Child Passenger Safety Week and a profile on an innovative teen driver training course. Plus, discover new resources and campaigns launching ahead of the busy, traffic-filled holiday season.

E-Device Buy Back: Orange County's Bold Move for Safer Streets



On September 13, 2026, the Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) joined the Orange County District Attorney's Office for its first e-bike and e-moto buy back event at Anaheim's Angel Stadium, which allowed residents to turn in illegally modified or unwanted e-bikes, e-motos and e-scooters for gift cards. The gift cards ranged from \$200 to \$1,000 depending on the type of e-device surrendered, and the first 75 attendees also received tickets to a Los Angeles Angels game. Nearly 1,000 e-devices were collected.

Families received information explaining the differences between e-bikes and e-motos along with guidance on safe riding practices. Local law enforcement, healthcare partners and safety organizations engaged directly with attendees, reinforcing the broader message that learning about the safe and responsible use of e-bikes is a key part of improving traffic safety overall.

"We are committed to building a culture of safety across California," said OTS Director Stephanie Dougherty. "Through innovative safety programs and our continued partnerships, we're shaping a culture where safe walking, biking and driving are the expectation and the norm."

Communities across California are facing a [rise in injuries and fatalities](#) involving high-powered e-devices. Preventable deaths continue to occur, prompting a growing response from local governments and safety partners.

To help the public understand the different rules for e-bike use, the OTS launched a new ["Know Your Bike, Know the Rules"](#) social media campaign that emphasizes the differences between e-bikes and e-motos, the e-bike classes and helmet requirements, and tips for drivers and riders on safe road interactions. The OTS also released a [quick reference guide](#) for parents and caregivers to better understand whether the bicycle they are looking to purchase is a street legal electric bicycle or "e-bike" and resources to encourage safe e-bike riding.

[Read the media advisory.](#)

The Right Seat Saves Lives: Child Passenger Safety Week 2026



[Child Passenger Safety Week](#) is a nationwide initiative dedicated to reminding families that the right car seat, properly installed, can make all the difference in a crash. On average, two children under 14 are killed every day, and hundreds more are injured, in traffic crashes nationwide.

Car seats are proven lifesavers, reducing the risk of fatal injury by 71% for infants and 54% for toddlers in passenger vehicles. In 2026, the OTS awarded 40 child passenger safety grants totaling more than \$8 million to expand free car seat checks, technician training, bilingual outreach and education efforts. The OTS also ran a [paid social media campaign](#) that educated families on the importance of using a child safety seat that fits to the child's age and size.

"Keeping children as safe as possible inside the vehicle is our top priority," OTS Director Stephanie Dougherty said. "By investing in programs that help families learn how to use car seats and boosters properly, we're giving parents and caregivers the knowledge and peace of mind that their children are riding safely."

During Child Passenger Safety Week September 20-26, 2026, communities across California and nationally offered free car seat inspections and educational events, culminating in National Seat Check Saturday on September 26, 2026. Certified technicians helped families make sure children were properly secured and that seats were properly installed. On September 22, 2026, the OTS joined the UC Davis Health [car seat check-up event](#) and shared educational materials and resources on upcoming changes in car seat laws.

Starting January 1, 2027, California's child passenger safety law will expand to include a [5-Step Test](#) to help parents and caregivers determine if their child is ready to transition

out of a booster seat. Children ages 8 to 16 must pass all steps of the test before they can use a seat belt without a booster seat. This law recognizes that every child grows differently, and that seat belts are designed for adults.

To find a car seat inspection station near you, use this [search function](#).

[Read this article about Child Passenger Safety Week from the Director of Safe Kids California and Injury Prevention Program at Children's Hospital Los Angeles.](#)

Safety Spotlight: National Seat Check Saturday



National Seat Check Saturday, a nationwide event on September 26, 2026, offered free car seat inspections and brought certified technicians together across the state to give parents, caregivers and other family members hands-on guidance on proper car seat fit and installation.

Child Passenger Safety Technicians (CPSTs) complete intensive, multi-day training that includes classroom instruction and supervised public car seat checkups. The top installation and use mistakes CPSTs commonly see are:

- Loose installation: Your car seat should not move more than one inch from side-to-side or front-to-back.
- Loose harness: If you can pinch the strap material on the shoulder, the harness is too loose.
- Chest clip is too low: It should be at armpit level.
- Not using the top tether: This step helps reduce head movement in a crash. The top tethers can be found behind the head rest, built into your car with a hook.

- Wrong recline angle: Most seats have a bubble level or angle indicator, to make sure it is within the marked range for the weight and height of your child.
- Using both the latch and the seat belt: Use one or the other.
- Expired seat: Always check the label for expiration dates and recall information.

[Information on Child Safety Seat Programs in your area.](#)

Athletes on the Road: How Coaches Play a Role in Prioritizing Student Safety



The OTS presented at the California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) Sac-Joaquin Section Athletic Administrators Summit in Sacramento September 28, 2026, to encourage coaches and mentors to help student athletes make [smart decisions on the road](#).

The OTS emphasized how coaches are uniquely positioned to influence young athletes to make responsible choices before, during and after athletic events. By fostering awareness of risks on the road and modeling safe road behaviors, students learn about how to stay in the game both on and off the field. The OTS shared resources, including the new ["Road Ahead" driving simulation game](#), and ways coaches and athletic administrators can empower student athletes to speak up for and practice safe road behaviors. This includes following the speed limit and driving for conditions, putting away distractions and never driving or riding with someone who is impaired.

[Learn more about the CIF Sac-Joaquin Section Athletic Administrators Summit.](#)

Empowering Teen Drivers: Ford Driving Skills for Life



Ford Philanthropy and the Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA) teamed up to offer the Ford Driving Skills for Life Program in Daly City on September 19, 2026, and Arcadia on September 26, 2026. Established in 2003, the program pairs newly licensed teens or teens with a learner's permit with professional instructors for behind-the-wheel training that is designed to improve hazard recognition, enhance vehicle control, and strengthen decision-making skills.

"Being safe is the cool, right thing to do," OTS Deputy Director of Communications and Public Affairs, Tim Weisberg, said at the event in Daly City. "We all deserve the same margin of safety, regardless of how we travel. Like anything new, driving safely takes practice. Like any hobby or sport, you get better the more you play. It's the same with driving."

The event featured a safety in mobility virtual reality simulator that shared the perspective of a bike rider to experience interactions between people walking, biking and driving. Teens also got to experience driving fully electric vehicles and test modern advanced driver assistance systems technologies on public roads with trained instructors.

[Learn more about Ford Driving Skills for Life.](#)



Publications, resources, training opportunities, and other relevant updates from our state and national traffic safety partners.

New AAA Foundation for Safety Study Identifies Factors Associated with Seat Belt Use

This [new AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety study](#) looks at why some people don't always wear their seat belts and the factors that influence those choices. The findings help traffic safety professionals create more effective strategies to encourage consistent seat belt use nationwide.

Impact of the UC Berkeley SafeTREC Community Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Program



This [SafeTREC article](#) highlights how the Community Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Program works with local communities to identify safety concerns and improve

conditions for people walking and biking. The program helps residents learn about crash data, assess safety issues and create action plans that support safer, more accessible streets.

Safe System Success Stories Show What Works 📄

The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) highlights how communities across the country are using Safe System principles to [prevent serious crashes before they happen](#). The case studies showcase practical strategies such as safer street design, lower speeds, transit improvements and data-driven planning.

New Report Highlights Oral Fluid Testing Program Successes 📄

A new National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) [Oral Fluid Testing Program Case Studies report](#) examines how five states addressed drug-impaired driving using oral fluid testing programs.

New UC Berkeley SafeTREC Study on Autonomous Vehicles and Vulnerable Road User Safety 📄

This [new SafeTREC study](#) reviews relevant information on the safety of autonomous vehicles, especially how autonomous vehicles interact with people walking and biking, and why understanding these interactions is important for safety.

New Governor's Highway Safety Association (GHSA) "The Intersection" Podcast: New Episode 🎧

In [episode 8 of "The Intersection,"](#) GHSA CEO Jonathan Adkins chats with USA Today Washington Bureau Chief Susan Page and dives into the power of women in road safety and world politics and how shared interests can bridge gaps between leaders and shape the future of public policy.

New GHSA Survey Reveals School Bus Safety Risks 📄

A new GHSA study reveals parents report their children face serious risks around school buses, the top of which is distracted drivers. [Read the survey](#) to learn more about these findings and what parents think can be done to protect students.



The OTS participates in community outreach and engagement events to connect with residents, local partners and safety partners to share information, gather feedback and

encourage Californians to Go Safely. These events provide valuable opportunities to build relationships, support local initiatives and ensure our traffic safety efforts are informed by the voices and needs of the communities we serve.

Farmworker Resource Fair – The OTS joined the Fresno Mexican Consulate for a Farmworker Resource Fair on September 1 and 2, in Fresno and Woodlake. The OTS engaged with residents and discussed possible countermeasures to improve traffic safety.



La Familia's Feria de Salud y Seguridad –

On September 18, the OTS participated in La Familia's Feria de Salud. 400 people attended the event and received educational materials on DUI prevention, seat belt safety and pedestrian safety.



UC Davis Health Car Seat Check-Up – The OTS attended the UC Davis Health and Child Action [Car Seat Check-Up event](#) on September 22. Child Passenger Safety Technicians were on hand to help parents and families make sure car seats were installed properly and appropriate for the child's age and size.



Riverside University Health System's Youth Traffic Safety Summit

The OTS attended Riverside University Health System's Youth Traffic Safety Summit on September 23. More than 80 teens attended the virtual summit that featured presentations from Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) about the dangers of underage drinking and driving intoxicated; the City of Riverside Police Department on e-bike laws and safe, responsible riding; a youth panel on how to choose safety in tough peer pressure moments, speaking up as a passenger, creating change in your community, and leadership. Attendees also participated in several surveys to provide their perspectives on traffic safety.



Lowrider Holiday Event – The OTS had an information table and engaged attendees at the Lowrider Holiday event in Modesto on September 26. More than 500 people received information about the dangers of driving under the influence, distracted driving and pedestrian safety. Attendees also learned about the Traffic Safety Champion program, were introduced to [The Road Ahead driving simulator game](#), and met Safety Sam, who reminded them to “Be Work Zone Alert” and move over and slow down in construction zones.



"Just Drive: Take Action Against

Distraction" Presentation –

The OTS presented "Just Drive: Take Action Against Distraction" to more than 3,700 employees from the California Department of Tax and Fee Administration (CDTFA) on September 29. The presentation was developed by the University of California, San Diego's Transportation Research and Education for Driving Safety (TREDS) program. The OTS and Caltrans also had an information booth at CDTFA's safety fair sharing resources from the *Go Safely, California* initiative, and other traffic safety materials.



Sacramento Republic Football Club Fans Tests *The Road Ahead* –

The OTS and Caltrans hosted an outreach table at the Sacramento Republic FC game on September 30, 2026, to introduce attendees to [*The Road Ahead*](#), a free, web-based driving simulation game that helps teens and soon-to-be drivers practice safe driving behaviors in realistic situations. More than 400 attendees interacted with the game during the match.





- 📌 October: [National Pedestrian Safety Month](#)
- 📌 October 17: [National Move Over Day](#)
- 📌 October 18-24: [National Teen Driver Safety Week](#)
- 📌 October 19-23: [National School Bus Safety Week](#)
- 📌 October 31: [Halloween](#) (DUI Prevention and Pedestrian Safety)

Media Toolkits

- *NEW* [Know Your Ride, Know the Rules](#)
- *NEW* [Buying an E-Bike: A Guide for Parents and Caregivers](#)
- *NEW* [ABCs for School Zone Safety](#) (Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety, Speeding)
- *NEW* [Bicycle, E-Bike and Pedestrian Safety](#) Social Toolkit
- *NEW* [Child Passenger Safety Week](#) Social Toolkit
- [Child Passenger Safety Law Brochure](#) (Occupant Protection)
- [Child Safety Seat Flier](#) (Occupant Protection)
- [E-Bikes, E-Motorcycles, and E-Scooters](#)
- [Impaired Driving](#)
- [Slow the Fast Down](#) (Speeding)
- [Crash Not Accident](#)
- [Traffic Safety Champion](#)
- [Empty Chair Club Initiative](#)
- [Vehicle Safety Recalls](#) (General)
- [Vehicular Heatstroke Prevention Social Media Toolkit](#) (Occupant Protection)

Keep an eye on your inboxes for campaign templates and social media assets.
Additional outreach materials are always available at GoSafelyCA.org/MediaToolkits.

[View the OTS 2026-2027 Communications Calendar](#)

Additional Resources

[Grantee Press Release Templates](#)

[Law Enforcement Liaison \(LEL\) Program](#)

[OTS Funding At a Glance](#)

[OTS Logos](#)

[Grant Program Resources](#)

[Traffic Safety Data](#)

The OTS administers traffic safety grants that deliver traffic safety programs to prevent people from being killed and seriously injured in California. The OTS is a department under the California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA).

Contact the OTS Communications & Public Affairs Team
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