



NEWPORT BEACH POLICE DEPARTMENT

## Press Release

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### **Newport Beach Police Department Joins National Campaign to End Distracted Driving**

**it's  
NOT  
worth  
it!**

As part of April's *Distracted Driving Awareness Month* campaign, the Newport Beach Police Department will be joining over 200 other local law enforcement agencies and the California Highway Patrol to increase education and enforcement efforts.

The purpose of the campaign is to raise awareness about the dangers of distracted driving, in an attempt to change behavior and save lives – not just in April, but year-round. The Newport Beach Police Department will join statewide “Zero Tolerance” enforcement campaigns on April 7 and April 20, when all agencies will be especially vigilant for distracted drivers. The campaign’s goal is not to issue a

high volume of citations, but enforcement efforts are sometimes necessary to communicate the severity of the risk that drivers are taking when they are not focused on their driving.

Distracted driving continues to be an issue of public safety, especially as the use of smartphones increases. Although it is often difficult to prove that distracted driving caused a collision, California had at least 84 fatal collisions in 2013, 85 in 2014, and 67 last year with distracted driving as a verified cause (although the actual number of cases is likely higher). The number of injury collisions for the same three-year period shows an upward trend: 10,078 in 2013, 10,463 in 2014, and 11,023 in 2015. Data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) shows that 3,179 people died nationwide in distracted driving collisions in 2014, which accounts for 10% of all crash fatalities. An additional 431,000 people (or 18% of all traffic collisions injuries) were injured in collisions involving distracted drivers.

“As we rely on our cell phones more and more in our everyday lives, we seem to be kidding ourselves in thinking that they don’t affect our driving,” said OTS Director Rhonda Craft.

“Crashes are up. The scientific evidence is solid. The dangers are real and they apply to all of us. We need to silence the distractions.”

The problem of distracted driving is significant, and well known. And yet the Department of Transportation notes that at any given moment during daylight hours, more than 660,000 vehicles on the road are being driven by someone using a hand-held cellphone.

NHTSA will conduct a television campaign in April with the message “U Drive. U Text. U Pay.” The Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) will also provide public service announcements and a social media campaign urging drivers to “Silence the Distractions.”

So, what exactly constitutes distracted driving? Distracted Driving is any activity that could divert a person’s attention away from the primary task of driving. Distractions – as varied as texting, using a cellphone, eating and drinking, grooming, reading (including maps), using a navigation system, watching a video, or adjusting a radio, CD player, or MP3 player – endanger drivers, passengers, and any bystanders in the area. But, because text messaging requires visual, manual, and cognitive attention from the driver, it is by far the most alarming distraction.

To avoid a distracted driving ticket or crash, the Newport Beach Police Department offers drivers the following tips:

- Turn off your phone and/or put it out of reach while driving.
- In your outgoing message, note that you cannot answer the phone while you are driving.
- Do not call or text anyone at a time when you think they may be driving.

The California Office of Traffic Safety joins Police, Sheriff, and CHP personnel in reminding everyone that the best way to end distracted driving is to educate all Americans about the dangers it poses.

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