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Riverside Police Department Joins Effort to Crack Down on Cell Phone Use and Texting

Texting and Driving Will Cost You: First Ticket Minimum \$159

(Riverside, CA) – How often do you see drivers texting or talking with hand-held cell phones and wish they would be stopped and cited? As part of California's first *Distracted Driving Awareness Month* in April, law enforcement in the city of Riverside will be holding zero tolerance days for cell phone use and texting. A ticket for violating either the hands free or no texting law costs a minimum of \$159, and subsequent tickets cost \$279.

Distracted driving is a serious traffic safety concern that puts everyone on the road at risk, joining speeding and alcohol as leading factors in fatal and serious injury crashes. As a result, law enforcement across the state, including the Riverside Police Department is increasingly cracking down on cell phone use and texting. Starting April 4th and throughout the month, Riverside PD will join over 225 local agencies plus 103 CHP Area Commands conducting zero tolerance enforcements.

"We take the issue of distracted driving very seriously," said Riverside Police Captain John Wallace. "Cell phone use and texting while driving is such a serious concern that we are putting officers on the road to enforce zero tolerance. Is that text message or cell phone call really worth \$159?"

Drivers who use hand-held devices are four times as likely to get into crashes serious enough to injure themselves. Younger, inexperienced drivers under 20 years old have the highest proportion of distraction-related fatal crashes. In addition, studies show that texting while driving can delay a driver's reaction time just as severely as having a blood alcohol content of a legally drunk driver.

"We recognize that convincing drivers to refrain from using cell phones or texting while driving isn't easy," said Office of Traffic Safety Director Christopher J. Murphy. "It's very difficult to resist the urge to check an incoming text or answer a cell phone call. That's why we are stepping up enforcement and public awareness efforts. Convincing California drivers to wear seat belts 20 years ago wasn't easy either, but in 2010 more than 96 percent buckled up and thousands of lives were saved."

(more)



Studies show that there is no difference in the risks between hands-free and hand-held cell phone conversations, both of which can result in "inattention blindness" which occurs when the brain isn't seeing what is clearly visible because the drivers' focus is on the phone conversation and not on the road.

There are simple measures drivers can take to minimize distractions in the vehicle:

- Turn your phone off or put it out of reach before starting the car.
- Alert callers that you are unable to take calls when driving by changing your voicemail message.
- Make it a point not to call or text anyone who may be driving, such as during the commute to and from work or school, especially parents calling teen drivers.
- If you do need to make an important call or respond to a text message, pull over to a safe place to do so.
- If going cold turkey is too much of a stretch and you just can't turn your phone off, consider using one of the available mobile phone apps that holds calls and incoming texts.

"We just want drivers to use some common sense when they're behind the wheel and focus on driving," said Murphy. "Think about the vast majority of calls and texts you send or receive everyday. Were any really worth a \$159 ticket – or worse, a crash, injury or death? It's just not worth it."

MEDIA NOTES: To schedule an interview regarding Distracted Driving and programs in California please contact Chris Cochran, California Office of Traffic Safety at (916) 509-3063 or via email at ccochran@ots.ca.gov.

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