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National Distracted Driving Awareness Month

San Fernando, CA

April is National Distracted Driving Awareness Month and the San Fernando Police Department will be joining law enforcement agencies statewide stopping drivers who violate California's hands-free cell phone laws.

Throughout the month, officers will be focusing their efforts during patrol and during special traffic details looking specifically for drivers unlawfully using their phones.

Distracted driving is dangerous, especially when it involves a cell phone. According to preliminary data from the California Highway Patrol (CHP), 66 people were killed and more than 6,500 injured in 2017 from distracted driving-related crashes. An alarming number of those injured and killed are teenagers and young adults.

"Cell phones remain one of the top distractions for drivers," said Chief of Police Anthony Vairo of the San Fernando Police Department. "Like any bad habit, it can be hard to break, but this habit can cause injuries or even death to the person on the phone, their passengers and others. No call is more important than someone's life"

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A 2018 observational survey by the California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) on driver cell phone use found about 4.5 percent of drivers are still using their cell phone illegally, a nearly 27 percent increase from 2016.

Under the most recent cell phone law that went into effect in 2017, drivers are prohibited from having a phone in their hand for any reason and can only use their phone in a hands-free manner. The phones must be mounted on the dashboard, windshield or center console, and can only be touched once with the swipe or tap of a finger to activate or deactivate a function.

As Sergeant Aguirre, Sergeant in charge of the Traffic Enforcement Unit at San Fernando Police states, "If you need to make or take a call or text someone, pull over and park at a safe location. If you struggle with staying off the phone while driving, put it in a place you can't reach, like the back seat or trunk. We really don't want to issue tickets, but more importantly, we want to prevent injuries and loss of life."

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