



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 2, 2014

CONTACT:

CHP Sgt. Denise Joslin at 818-240-8200
Dr. Kelly Browning, Executive Director
(813) 728-3998

**CHP, Impact Teen Drivers and Others Join to Combat
Distracted Driving, Change Driving Culture**

LOS ANGELES, Calif. (April 2, 2014) – The California Highway Patrol (CHP) joined with Impact Teen Drivers (ITD), the California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS), the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) football team, and local student leaders to observe National Distracted Driving Awareness Month and California Teen Safe Driving Week by launching a unified effort to change the driving culture to one that is distraction-free.

“It takes a conscious effort on the part of every driver to avoid distractions behind the wheel,” said CHP Commissioner Joe Farrow. “Ask yourself: is that phone call or text message worth my life or the lives of others around me? The answer is no. It’s not worth it!”

California has hundreds of thousands of miles of roadways, where millions of commuters’ lives converge daily. Sadly, every year, thousands of lives—including too many young lives—come to an end on these same roads as a result of reckless and distracted driving, which is *the* number one killer of teens in America. These deaths attributed to inattention are 100 percent preventable.

In 2013, nearly half of surveyed Californians agreed that texting while driving is the most serious distraction for drivers. Nearly 70 percent said that they had been hit or nearly hit by a driver who was talking or texting on a cell phone (*California Traffic Safety Survey*). The survey highlights a very real danger; three seconds of texting while driving 65 mph is equivalent to driving the length of a football field blindfolded.

“Catastrophic collisions can happen in a split second,” said Brian Kelly, Secretary of the California State Transportation Agency. “No text or phone call is worth that risk.”

“Distracted driving is the traffic safety challenge of our generation,” said Dr. Kelly Browning, Executive Director of ITD. “Just as reducing driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs and increasing seatbelt use required a strong combination of education and enforcement to effect culture change, so too will stopping the current epidemic of distracted driving.”

The Impact Teen Drivers’ educational program is designed to raise awareness of the dangers of distracted driving. Through its partnership with the California Department of Education, Impact’s program connects with students at schools throughout the state to create long-term behavior and culture change.

-MORE-

Community leaders are going a step beyond offering a voice for the cause—they are springing into action. For example, the UCLA football team created a Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) campus chapter and is mentoring local high school, middle school, and elementary students on the importance of making good decisions while in a vehicle.

Another valuable way for young drivers to develop their driving consciousness is through hands-on experience. The event included a closed-track course set up by Mercedes-Benz Driving Academy that forced teens to measure their susceptibility to dangerous distractions on the road. Teens navigated the course while experiencing the impairment caused by everyday distractions.

The problem of reckless and distracted driving cannot be overstated but neither can the degree to which it is preventable. Today was a celebration of California's culture and its ability to evolve. The UCLA football team and ITD, along with many other prominent partner organizations and community leaders, are confident that California's driving culture will progress to one that is distraction-free. In this state of big dreams, drivers will refuse to let distracted driving interrupt their bright futures.

#

ABOUT IMPACT TEEN DRIVERS

Impact Teen Drivers was created through the combined efforts of the California Association of Highway Patrolmen, the California Teachers Association, and California Casualty to raise awareness among teens, parents, and communities about the consequences of reckless and distracted driving. For more information about Impact Teen Drivers, or to set up a presentation in your area, please e-mail info@impactteendrivers.org or call 916-733-7432.

Funding for this program was provided by a grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.