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San Mateo Police Department challenges drivers to ‘silence’ the distraction
April is Distracted Driving Awareness Month

San Mateo, Calif. – April is National Distracted Driving Awareness Month and San Mateo Police Department will be joining law enforcement agencies statewide stopping drivers who violate California’s hands-free cell phone law.

On April 4 and April 19, San Mateo Police Department will have additional officers on patrol looking specifically for drivers on their phones.

Last year, San Mateo Police Department issued **1,833** citations to drivers texting, calling or performing another function on their phone. 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.

Chief Susan Manheimer recently said, “We are focusing on distracted driving, as cell phones are our most alarming traffic safety threat. Sending or reading a text or dialing your phone takes your eyes off the road for 3-5 seconds, which is like driving an entire block blindfolded!”

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.

“Cell phones remain one of the top distractions for drivers,” said San Mateo Police Department Traffic Division Sergeant Shannon Hagan. “Like any bad habit, it can be hard to break, but this habit can have life-altering consequences.”

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. That includes while stopped at a red light. 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. First-time offenders face a [\\$162 fine](#).

If you need to make a call or text someone, pull over and park at a safe location. Struggling to stay off the phone while driving? Put your phone in a place you can’t reach, like the backseat or trunk.

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