



NEWS RELEASE

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Give the Phone a Break, Focus on the Road *April is Distracted Driving Awareness Month*

Ventura, Calif. — April is Distracted Driving Awareness Month, and the Ventura Police Department encourages drivers to give the phone a break and focus on the road.

Throughout April, the Ventura Police Department will have officers on patrol specifically looking for drivers who violate the state's hands-free cell phone law.

"When you are driving, give the phone a rest," said Ventura Police Corporal Al Gomez. "A driver's number one focus should be on the road. Anything that distracts you from the task of driving, especially a phone, puts yourself and others at risk."

According to the 2020 California Statewide Public Opinion Survey, more than 75% of surveyed drivers listed "Distracted Driving because of texting" as their biggest safety concern.

"Not driving distracted is a simple, but significant behavior change," said Corporal Gomez. "The goal is to increase compliance with the hands-free cell phone law and keep people safe."

Under current law, drivers are not allowed to hold a phone or other electronic device while behind the wheel. Drivers under 18 are not allowed to use a phone for any reason, including hands-free.

The Ventura Police Department urges drivers to put their phones away behind the wheel. Follow these steps for a safe driving experience:

- If you need to make a call or send a text, pull over and park your car in a safe location. Once you are safely off the road and parked, it is safe to use your phone.
- Ask your passenger to be your "designated texter." Allow them access to your phone to respond to calls or messages.
- Do not engage in social media scrolling or messaging while driving, even when stopped at traffic signals.
- Cell phone use is habit-forming. Struggling to not text and drive? Activate your phone's "Do Not Disturb" feature, or put your phone in the trunk, glove box, or back seat of your vehicle until you arrive at your destination.

Funding for this program is provided by a grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety, through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. To learn more about the Office of Traffic Safety grant and VPD's educational efforts, visit ots.ca.gov or contact Emily Graves, Community Outreach Specialist with the Ventura Police Department, at egraves@cityofventura.ca.gov.

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