



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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

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

On the weekends of April 19 and April 26, from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m., the Benicia Police Department will have additional officers on patrol looking specifically for drivers on 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.

“No call or text is worth more than your life,” Benicia Police Chief Erik Upson said. “Like any bad habit, it can be hard to break, but this habit can have life-altering consequences.”

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 2017.

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. 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. Put your phone in a place you can’t reach, like the backseat or trunk.

Funding for distracted driving enforcement operations are provided by a grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety, through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.



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