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SERVING DEL NORTE COUNTY AND HUMBOLDT COUNTY SCHOOLS

Distracted Driving Awareness Month

At any given daylight moment 9% of drivers are talking on phones while driving. Distracted drivers miss seeing up to 50% of what is around them, including pedestrians, bicyclists, traffic signs and other vehicles.

Distracted driving is a public health issue that affects us all. The latest statistics show motor vehicle fatalities are up 6% from 2015. More than 40,000 people were killed on our nation's roadways last year, and distracted driving is a major contributor. Each death is 100% preventable.

Our cars are more connected than ever. Automakers seem to be in an arms race to put the latest technology into our vehicles so we can text, email, update social media and even make dinner reservations from our dashboards. From cell phones to dashboard infotainment systems to evolving voice command features – all pose a threat to our safety. Just because these systems are available does not make them safe to use.

Technologies that allow drivers to make hands-free calls, dictate texts or emails and update social media have not been thoroughly safety tested. Existing research shows these systems can be distracting to drivers. In fact, the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety found drivers doing some voice tasks via infotainment systems may remain distracted for as long as 27 seconds after they finish the task!

Car crashes are a major cause of workplace death. Many employees are aware of the danger distracted driving imposes but feel a burden of their job relying on them to stay connected, even when behind the wheel. Numerous employers have implemented cell phone policies banning handheld and hands-free devices for all employees and creating a culture that encourages employees to embrace safety. Not only is this an added level of safety for employees, but it protects employers from being held legally responsible if an employee is involved in a distracted driving crash.



A widespread myth is that most car crashes are caused by car malfunctions such as faulty brakes, blown tires or engine problems. Vehicle problems are not the primary cause of car crashes. They represent a very small portion of crashes, and most vehicle problems have to do with improperly inflated or maintained tires. More than 90% of all crashes are caused by driver error and can be prevented.

For Distracted Driving Awareness Month, and the rest of the calendar year, avoid the dash to the dashboard!