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MEDIA RELEASE / COMMUNITY ALERT

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EYES FORWARD, HANDS ON THE WHEEL: FOCUSED DRIVING SAVES LIVES

April is Distracted Driving Awareness Month

San Mateo, CA – In its efforts to prevent distracted driving and save lives on our roads, San Mateo Police Department is reminding all drivers to stay focused, keep their eyes forward and keep their hands on the wheel. Whether checking a phone, eating or adjusting the radio, distractions can have devastating consequences.

Staying focused behind the wheel is something we all need to do. Distracted Driving Awareness Month is an important reminder that even a moment of inattention or a quick glance at the phone can lead to serious consequences. Distracted driving is not only risky; it is deadly. Stay focused, stay alert and help us keep our roads safe.

According to the 2024 California Statewide Public Opinion Survey, nearly 74% of drivers surveyed said that distracted driving, because of texting, was their biggest safety concern. In 2022, there were 148 people killed in distracted driving traffic crashes in California. The numbers are likely underreported because law enforcement officers may not always be able to tell that distraction was a factor in a crash.

The San Mateo Police Department will be actively looking for drivers throughout the month, and always, who are in violation of the state's hands-free cell phone law.

Under current law, drivers are not allowed to hold a phone or electronic communications device while operating a vehicle, even when stopped at a red light. This includes talking, texting or using an app. Using a handheld cell phone while driving is punishable by a fine, and violating the hands-free law for a second time within 36 months of a prior conviction for the same offense will result in a point being added to a driver's record.

Follow these simple steps to stay focused and protect everyone on the road:

- **Put your phone away**: Silence notifications and store your phone where you can't reach it while driving.
- **Plan ahead**: Set your GPS, adjust mirrors and finish any tasks before you start driving.

- **Keep both hands on the wheel and eyes on the road**: Avoid eating, grooming or adjusting controls while driving.
- **Be a role model**: Show your passengers, especially young drivers, that focused driving is the norm.
- **Speak up**: If you're a passenger and see the driver distracted, kindly remind them to stay focused.
- **Pull over if necessary**: If something urgent comes up, stop in a safe place before responding.

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