

Traffic Briefs

February 9, 2011

HANG UP AND DRIVE

It's not where your hands are....it's where your head is.



Distracted driving now rates right up there with Drinking and Driving and Speeding as California's most prevalent traffic concerns. Numerous studies show that talking on a cell phone, whether hand-held or hands-free, causes slower reaction time, lowers the ability to stay within lanes and actually causes "inattention blindness," where the brain is not able to perceive things that are in plain sight. And texting while driving? **Get real.** How self involved must a driver be to put other motorists at risk so he or she can text while driving?

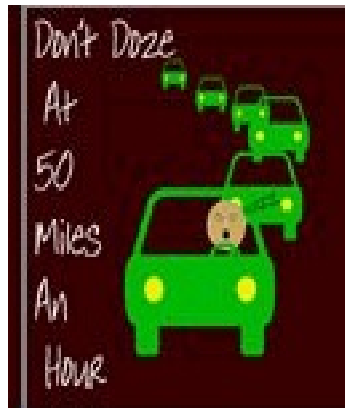
Clearly, balancing all the distractions already associated with driving, e.g., radio, passengers, food, coffee, etc., and then insert a cell phone into the equation and a recipe for disaster is created. In 2010, the streets of Carson bore witness to **over a thousand** traffic collisions. Hundreds of those were rear-end type collisions that were caused by "inattention." By definition,

when someone is rear-ended, speed is the documented cause. The speed of the following vehicle is greater than the speed of the followed vehicle, hence, an unsafe speed violation occurred and a traffic collision resulted. But, inattention is almost always an associated factor in the collision. The unsafe speed is preceded by the inattention.

A huge goal for us would be to see a reduction of traffic collisions in Carson in 2011. And one way we will be trying to meet that goal is through education and enforcement. Anytime a motorist is observed talking or texting on a cell phone, not hands-free, a traffic stop may be conducted. As with all infractions, deputies may or may not issue citations for observed violations. Our intent, whether perceived as enforcement or education, is to ensure drivers have attention where it belongs; on their driving.

I make no promises, but a "Hello officer, I'm sorry about the cell phone thing," goes a lot farther than, "**Why did you stop me!!!**" in getting a warning vs. a citation.

Sleeping and driving was the cause of more than one bad accident in Carson in 2010.



Drowsy driving might contribute to roughly 1 to 4 percent of all traffic collisions. It's nearly impossible to identify all collisions caused by sleeping or drowsy drivers because rarely do drivers admit to being drowsy or sleeping. Fortunately, some do, and often times those collisions are witnessed by people who saw the offending driver nodding off before the collision. I say fortunately because it allows us to better understand what is causing traffic collisions in Carson. Historically, it's been drunk drivers, speed, unsafe lane changes, following too closely, and failing to obey traffic signals. We are now learning that distractions and fatigue are playing a bigger role than ever.

Collisions in Carson are occurring at all the major intersections, but in 2010, the intersection at **Wilmington Avenue and 223rd Street** was our busiest with 16. Sepulveda Boulevard and Main Street saw 10, and Figueroa Street and Torrance Boulevard saw 9. As you might have guessed, turning violations and red light violations were the primary reasons for those collisions.

If you care about someone, one of the best things you can do is tell them to get off the phone if they're driving, not drive if they're tired, and to buckle up. They may not thank you, but their safety should be thanks enough.

Thanks for reading, and if you have any traffic related questions please feel free to call our office at (310) 847-8379.

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