



**FEBRUARY 2009**

## **QUARTERLY COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER**

### **NEW LAW FOR 9-1-1**

As of January 1, 2009, California State Law AB1976 has increased penalties for making non-emergency calls to 9-1-1. Now, the first non-emergency call to 9-1-1 will generate a warning. The second non-emergency call to 9-1-1 from the same phone number, will generate a \$50 fine. The third such call from the same number will generate a \$100 fine. All subsequent non-emergency calls to 9-1-1 from the same phone number will generate a \$250 fine for each call.

The new law increasing the fine amounts are due to the fact that some people still abuse the intent for this service. The volume of non-emergency 9-1-1 call has, in some areas, clogged the available 9-1-1 lines and blocked true emergency calls - resulting in the loss of what could have been life saving events. Because of this, and the new law increasing fines, we decided it was a good time to review the 9-1-1 system, its purpose and how and when to use it.

#### **WHAT WE KNOW AND UNDERSTAND**

1. First, there are millions of people who do understand and respect the 9-1-1 system.
2. However, there are millions of other people in this country who do not understand what 9-1-1 should be used for. For these people, it's... "Got a problem? Call 9-1-1". These are the folks who are likely to call with questions like...."Was that an earthquake?"... "Is Stetson Avenue open to traffic?" ... "What time does the parade start?"
3. Some callers are kids playing with the family's phone. Perhaps their family has not taught them the phone is not a toy and 9-1-1 is a special number to be treated with great respect.
4. Some people call with real personal emergencies that the 9-1-1 systems were never intended to handle, but the callers do not know who else to call. These people call for such help as: they are hungry; they need non-emergency medical assistance, but their doctor cannot see them; they are too sick to get out of bed, but they need to have a prescription filled. These can be real emergencies; however, the 9-1-1 system was never designed to handle them.

## **WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW**

### **9-1-1 EMERGENCY**

Nearly everyone will have to use 9-1-1 during their lifetime. When a person is not properly prepared for responding to an emergency, then fear, panic, doubt, and confusion can take hold. However, if an individual applies some basic principals and procedures, he/she can respond successfully to an emergency. Following are some suggestions on how to respond to an emergency.

1. **REMAIN CALM! CALM YOURSELF BY TAKING A DEEP BREATH** and use that split second to gain your composure. Assess the situation. Collect your thoughts. Understand what is happening. Ask yourself, "WHAT MUST I DO?". **THEN, TAKE IMMEDIATE ACTION.** By concentrating on **WHAT YOU MUST DO**, you will avoid panic. By calming yourself and responding intelligently, you will be able to deal appropriately with the emergency situation.
2. **DETERMINE IF IT'S AN EMERGENCY.** Ask yourself, "Are immediate Police, Fire Department or Paramedics assistance needed **RIGHT NOW** to protect life, property or to prevent or interrupt crime activities?". An **EMERGENCY** situation is when **IMMEDIATE ACTION IS NECESSARY** to save someone from death; to prevent a fire from spreading; to prevent an accident (i.e.: a tree fallen across the roadway); to interrupt a crime in progress and apprehend the criminal (i.e.: auto theft, burglary, robbery, arson, assault, rape, sound of gun shots, child abduction).
3. **WHEN YOU DETERMINE IMMEDIATE HELP IS REQUIRED** - do not call your neighbors, your children, or a friend across town. **CALL 9-1-1 first**, then call whomever you need.
4. **WHEN YOU CALL 9-1-1**
  - Stay on the line until the 9-1-1 Operator tells you to hang up. **COOPERATE** fully with the 9-1-1 Operator. Answer all the questions you are asked even if you think they are not important. Remember, you are talking with a highly trained 9-1-1 Operator. They do not want to waste your time or theirs either. All the questions are for a purpose. You may not understand at the moment, but the Operators know what they need to know to help you. **DO EXACTLY AS THEY SAY. SPEAK CLEARLY and DISTINCTLY.** Tell them **WHAT HAS HAPPENED** and **WHAT IS NEEDED.** (Example - you were out for a walk, you see someone near you suddenly collapse. He/she may have had a heart attack and your call may save their life.)
  - Be prepared to give the Operator your name, address, telephone number and a one or two sentence description of what you actually see and hear. Be prepared to answer the following questions as appropriate: What is happening? When did it happen? Where is the incident taking place? Are there weapons involved? What is the license number? What do the suspects look like? Which direction are they headed?

Your Cellular 9-1-1 calls will go to the nearest California Highway Patrol office.

- Use the same criteria to determine an emergency as you would from your phone at home.
- Learn how to operate your phone safely before you try to use it. Read the owner's manual.
- In your vehicle, keep the phone so it is easily accessible, within comfortable reach and close to your line of vision.
- Try it first, but do not practice on 9-1-1.
- Pull over to the side of the road and stop the vehicle before making your call.
- Program 9-1-1 into your phone's permanent memory.

**NON-EMERGENCIES**

What if: you think you might become a scam victim and need some help; you have safety questions and you need help; you have safety questions and you need advice (not financial); someone suspicious is prowling your neighborhood; you've just come home and discovered your home has been burglarized; your vehicle was stolen, but you don't know who or when; it's 3 A.M. and your home is vibrating from loud music and parties nearby; You think there may be gang or drug activity in your neighborhood; you want to start a Neighborhood Watch. These are not life threatening situations, but rather examples of things that might go wrong. What can you do? Telephone us.

**WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU,  
BUT NOT ON THE 9-1-1 LINES.**

Please use our traditional, non-emergency telephone lines.

**NON 911-EMERGENCY TELEPHONE NUMBERS**

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| • <b>HEMET POLICE</b><br>765-2400                      | • <b>HEMET FIRE</b><br>765-2450                    | • <b>A.M.R. AMBULANCE</b><br>658-2826       |
| • <b>R.C. SHERIFF</b><br>1-800-950-2444 or<br>791-3400 | • <b>COUNTY FIRE</b><br>654-7912                   | • <b>SAN JACINTO POLICE</b><br>654-2702     |
| • <b>REPORT GRAFFITI</b><br>765-2309                   | • <b>CALIFORNIA<br/>HIGHWAY PATROL</b><br>652-2061 | • <b>NEIGHBORHOOD<br/>WATCH</b><br>965-2415 |

For other personal emergencies or emergencies not served by 9-1-1, first try asking the people in your church for help. Many of our Valley churches provide outstanding assistance for our people. If that does not work for you, consult the HELP LINE page in your telephone directory or contact one of the following agencies:

- |  |   |                                     |
|--|---|-------------------------------------|
| • <b>COMMUNITY PANTRY</b><br>929-1101  | • <b>SALVATION ARMY</b><br>766-2020   | • <b>PRIME OF LIFE</b><br>929-0086  |
| • <b>INFORM RIVERSIDE<br/>INFORMATION<br/>&amp; REFERRAL</b><br>1-800-464-1123 or<br>211 | • <b>RIVERSIDE COUNTY<br/>OFFICE ON AGING</b><br>1-800-510-2020 or 697-4697 | • <b>VALLEY RESTART</b><br>658-8987 |
|  | • <b>HEMET FOOD CENTER</b><br>658-8987                                      |                                     |

## NEW LAWS FOR MOTORISTS

During 2008, the California State Legislature passed a number of new laws that should be of special interest to motorists.

Effective January 1, 2009:

- SB1407 enables the state to raise surcharges on: Traffic tickets by \$35 — “Fix-it” tickets by \$15 — Parking tickets by \$3 — and court costs to attend traffic school by \$25. Why has this been done? These new fees enable the state to pay for the construction and rehabilitation of courthouses. Other fees for registration and smog and tests and taxes on out-of-state vehicles will also be Implemented to help offset the state budget deficit. You won't be able avoid those fees and/or taxes, but you can avoid the increased traffic ticket fees by not getting ticketed.
- In 2006, the legislature passed SB1613. This law restricted the use of cell-phones in vehicles. It became effective on July 1, 2008. Soon after the law became effective, authorities realized that it did not address text messaging or e-mailing.

Statistics reveal texting and/or e-mailing create huge distractions for drivers. Distracted drivers nearly double the risk of being involved in a crash or near-crash. Therefore, effective January 1, 2009, SB28 prohibits vehicle drivers from texting messages or e-mailing while driving. Fines for violating this law are at least \$76 (after penalties) for the first offense and about \$190 for subsequent offenses, depending on the county in which the violation occurred.

- SB1567 requires that when a vehicle is being driven, any portable GPS device in use and affixed to the windshield must be located either in a 7-inch square in the lower right corner or in a 5-inch square in the lower left corner. The device cannot interfere with the deployment of an air bag. Motorists may still mount a GPS device on top of the dash as long as it does not block their view of the road. The fine for a violation is approximately \$108 depending on the county in which the violation occurred.

## PREVENTING CRASHES

Jason had a perfect driving record. He had never received a parking or a traffic ticket. He'd never been in an accident. He had excellent paid up vehicle insurance, and he always received a 100% score on his drivers tests. One day he was driving along the freeway. The sun was shining. He moved steadily with the traffic at about 60-65 MPH. The radio was playing his favorite music when his cell phone rang. Without even thinking he looked down at the passenger seat where he had place his phone. Just then the driver in front of him stepped on his brakes — hard. Jason heard the squeal and immediately stepped on his own brake pedal, but it was too late. Fortunately, Jason was wearing his seat belt, but it took many months before he was well enough to drive again.

This story is not unique or rare. Modern life is with risk such as fires, floods, earthquakes, airplane crashes, petty crimes, murder, or simple falls in a bathtub, and vehicle accidents. Most of us worry about these things sometimes — but, did you know, in most people's daily lives, driving is the riskiest activity we perform?

According to a study conducted by the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute (VTTI) researcher, most

vehicle crashes are not accidents — they could have been prevented. Not that you can control the way other people drive, but you can lower the chances that you'll be involved in a vehicle crash by avoiding certain types of high-risk driving behavior. Surprised? Well, think about it for a moment. What counts as risky driving behavior?

Consider these:

1. Drunk Driving — about 40% of collisions that result in death are alcohol related.
2. Speeding nearly triples the risk of being involved in a crash or near crash. Driving too fast for existing driving conditions reduces your ability to steer safely, shortens your stopping distance and prevents you from reacting quickly enough to avoid a crash.

Even relatively small speed increases can have a larger, possibly lethal, consequence because the vehicle's crash probability increases exponentially with it's speed:

For example:

- 50 MPH vs 55 MPH increases a vehicle's impact by 21%.
- 60 MPH vs 50 MPH increases a vehicle's impact by 44%.

Speeding is probably the single biggest cause of traffic fatalities. According to experts. Reducing average traffic speed by 10% could reduce traffic crashes by 34%.

3. Drowsy driving nearly triples the risk of being involved in a crash or near crash. According to the National Sleep Foundation, about half of all adult drivers sometimes drive while drowsy. More than 37% of drivers admit to having fallen asleep at least once while driving. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, about 51% of teens reported driving while drowsy.

The actual number of crashes caused by drowsy drivers is really not known because drowsiness can easily be overlooked as a cause.

ALERT. If you are taking medicines of any type, either prescriptions or over-the-counter, carefully read the WARNING instructions on the labels or printed material that comes with the product. You may be greatly surprised by what you read. Even a simple allergy medication can cause "marked drowsiness". Consuming alcohol while the medication is in your system can also greatly increase risk of drug side effects.

You should also be aware that some medicines – like cough medicine – can actually contain alcohol. So it's wise to also read the list of active ingredients in your medicines.

4. Distracted or inattentive driving nearly doubles the risk of being involved in a crash or near crash. In the VTTI study, instances of distraction or inattentive driving were measured by the number of times that drivers took their eyes off of the road for no more than two seconds. Researchers observed that drivers were distracted nearly one third of the time that vehicles were in motion. Engaging in non-driving tasks and not watching the road carefully contributes far more to crashes and near crashes

than previously believed. Distractions reported as most perilous included: • Using cell phones and PDA's • conversing with passengers • internal distractions such as moving objects around • vehicle related factors such as fussing with radio and vehicle controls • personal hygiene • eating and drinking.

5. Aggressive driving can be hard to define, but you'll know it when you see it. Rude gestures, verbal abuse, flashing headlights, aggressive tailgating, driving at excessive speeds, unsafe lane changes, or deliberately blocking others from changing lanes.

Since aggressive driving is difficult to define, there are few estimates of the number of crashes it causes; but surveys of drivers suggest that the aggressive driving problem is widespread and perhaps growing.

## SUMMARY

Risk is a regular part of American life – whether we're driving the roads near home or just going for a walk. (Most traffic crashes occur within a few miles from home and in California and pedestrians are involved in 1 in 6 traffic fatalities.)

But for most of us, driving is the most dangerous regular activity we do. We can reduce our risk and get to our destination safely if we consider:

1. Driving with our focus fully on the road
2. Reducing our speed
3. Not driving while under the influence of alcohol
4. Not driving while sleepy. Remember to check your medicines label.
5. Driving less aggressively
6. Consider not using your cell phone and consider not answering an incoming call while driving. (After all, the call might be a wrong number or a sales call. Have you placed your cell phone on the Federal Don't Call List?)
7. Eating, drinking and grooming really should be done outside your vehicle or at least when your vehicle is parked.
8. Limit conversations with passengers to short and light content.

**HEMET POLICE WANTS TO HEAR FROM YOU**

**YOU HAVE A QUESTION? WE HAVE ANSWERS.**

Send your comments, suggestions, questions, or just interesting thoughts to the Hemet Police Department. We might even publish them in a future edition of the Quarterly Newsletter. Reach us at:

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