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NEWS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HOW SAFE ARE THE STREETS IN FRONT OF OUR SCHOOLS?

MORE THAN 10,250 DISTRACTIONS WITNESSED IN 88 CALIFORNIA INTERSECTIONS IN FRONT OF SCHOOLS.

Drivers distracted by phones, passengers, pets, food and much more operating their vehicles past California schools, visibly unfocused on what should be their only task behind the wheel – responsible, safe driving. Through the annual Roadwatch survey, Friday Night Live (FNL) members across California witnessed first-hand the reality that distracted driving remains a prevalent threat to other drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists

On October 10, Friday Night Live members surveyed 88 intersections near high schools and middle schools in 30 counties across California and observed 10,252 cases of distracted driving in just one hour's time, an average of 116.5 instances per intersection surveyed. That means that, at any given minute between 7:00AM and 8:00AM, there were at least 171 distracted drivers in California – in one single minute. Furthermore, these observations occurred in front of schools, at a time when the area is most likely to be filled with pedestrians, new drivers, and cyclists. These results show an increase in distracted driving behaviors of over 7.5% since the 2016 Roadwatch, when 12,852 instances were recorded at 119 intersections.

Two Solano County FNL chapters, located at Armijo High School in the Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District and Vanden High School in the Travis Unified School District, observed more than 300 accounts of distracted driving during their Roadwatch assessment of 8 intersections, for an average of 37 instances recorded per location and an average of 1.62 instances of distracted driving per minute. One Armijo FNL member said, "this was an interesting experience because we overly trust others to be well aware of their surroundings without being aware of just how distracted drivers are."

Driven by a desire to improve traffic safety in their local communities and empowered by a grant from The Allstate Foundation through the California Friday Night Live Partnership (CFNLP), students compiled startling statistics from thousands of vehicles they observed with both attentive and distracted drivers. During this learning-focused Roadwatch, distractions ranged from the all-too-typical use of a hand-held cellphone to the less-often-observed kissing, eating with utensils, and using a tablet. Each distraction observed is highly dangerous and 100% avoidable. The top driving distractions were:

- *Use of a hand-held device: 3,224 total, 37 per intersection average*
- *Eating or drinking: 2,313 total, 27 per intersection average*
- *Personal grooming: 1,253 total, 14 per intersection average*
- *Reaching for an item: 1,138 total, 13 per intersection average*

Distractions Defined: More than just cellphone use, distracted driving is categorized by California Highway Patrol as a range of activities that impact a driver’s visual, auditory, physical, or cognitive abilities when driving.

Distracted Driving Will Cost You: In California, a first citation for texting and driving is \$162. Not only will it cost you monetarily, according to the California Highway Patrol, a driver is 23 times more likely to be involved in a collision if they text while driving.

The CFNLP organizes this Allstate Foundation-funded Roadwatch, as well as the annual Friday Night Live Youth Summit, which drew over 700 participants this past September. The aim is to empower young people to raise awareness among drivers of all ages about the importance of eliminating distractions and promoting safe, focused driving behaviors.

Year after year, Roadwatch proves to be a vital tool for not only raising awareness about the issue of distracted driving, but also for creating real change in traffic safety throughout California. Roadwatch is also a great platform for preparing young drivers and FNL leaders to raise awareness around National Teen Driver Safety Week, that took place October 15-21, 2017.

“Reducing distractions behind the wheel is something we all can do — it costs nothing and its savings are enormous,” said Freddy Santos, Allstate’s senior corporate relations manager for California. “When we choose to drive safer, we improve the safety of everyone on the road at the same time.”

“Engaging California’s young people in this way encourages their positive and healthy development and empowers them to become active leaders,” says Jim Kooler, CFNLP administrator. “Programs like our annual Youth Summit and Roadwatch allow California youth to lead their peers in reducing distracted driving collisions.”

Not Just Cellphones

Additional driving distractions observed by this year’s Roadwatch participants:

- Extreme volume on radio: 401 total
- Pet on driver’s lap: 361 total
- Smoking or vaping: 369 total

Traffic crashes remain the number one killer of young people ages 15-24 in America. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, in 2014, 3,179 people were killed, and 431,000 were injured in motor vehicle crashes involving distracted drivers. A 2013 study revealed that nearly 70% of California drivers surveyed said they had been hit or nearly hit by a driver who was talking or texting on a cell phone (California Traffic Safety Survey).

Active in 50 counties statewide, CFNLP engages young people to become active leaders and resources in their communities. For more information about Friday Night Live visit, www.fridaynightlive.org.

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