

MERCED POLICE DEPARTMENT

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Share the road: Highlighting traffic safety efforts for pedestrians

September is California Pedestrian Safety Month

September 1st marked the beginning of Pedestrian Safety Month with the goal to reduce the numbers of pedestrians being killed and injured on California roadways. The Merced Police Department, as well state agencies, community partners and law enforcement agencies throughout the state are urging pedestrians and drivers alike to be aware of each other at all times and share the road responsibly.

Pedestrian deaths are on the rise both in California and nationally. In 2016, 867 pedestrians were killed and more than 14,000 were injured on California roadways alone. Since 2012, pedestrian deaths have increased by nearly 33 percent, growing substantially faster than any other type of traffic-related death.

For the city of Merced in 2017, 59 pedestrians were involved in collisions. All three traffic fatalities that year in Merced were pedestrians. So far in 2018, 35 pedestrians were involved in collisions. The three traffic fatalities this year are also pedestrians. Over two years, no deaths of people inside of a vehicle.

In order to reverse this trend of pedestrian injuries and deaths, the Merced Police Department is joining the California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) in their efforts to remind the public that ["Pedestrians Don't Have Armor."](#) The campaign highlights the importance of pedestrian safety, whether one is on foot or behind the wheel. The campaign features everyday pedestrians clad in body armor made from car parts, a symbol that in real life, pedestrians don't have any protection when hit by a vehicle, no matter who is at fault.

"Pedestrian safety goes both ways," OTS Director Rhonda Craft said. "Whether you are walking or driving, there is a shared responsibility when it comes to looking out for one another."

The Merced Police Department along with OTS, law enforcement and other community partners will use Pedestrian Safety Month as a way to educate the public about traffic rights, rules and responsibilities, as well as identify trouble spots where there are higher incidents of pedestrian versus vehicle collisions.

To ensure we can all get where we need to go safely, the Merced Police Department offers tips for pedestrians and drivers.

Pedestrians

- Be obvious and predictable, crossing at crosswalks or intersections only, walk facing traffic and as far from traffic as possible if there is no sidewalk.
- Make eye contact with drivers; never assume a driver sees you.
- Look left-right-left before you step into the crosswalk: having a green light or the "WALK" signal does not mean it is safe to cross.
- Look for cars backing up, including white backup lights or signs the vehicle is running. Don't dart out between parked cars.
- Avoid distractions. Don't walk and use your phone at the same time.
- Wear bright clothing during the day and reflective materials (or use a flashlight) at night.

Drivers

- Be alert for pedestrians, especially at intersections and crosswalks where they have the right of way.
- Put down the cell phone and just drive.
- Use extra caution when backing up. Look for bicyclists or pedestrians who may be approaching.
- Be patient and courteous. Wait for pedestrians to cross street or intersection before proceeding.

Funding for this DUI operation is provided to the Merced Police Department by a grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety, through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

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