



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Friday, December 20, 2019

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## **Fire Agencies Partner for Highway 17 Safety**

*Please Slow Down, Pay Attention, and Watch for Responders*

LOS GATOS – With winter weather and holiday travel beginning, fire departments in Santa Clara and Santa Cruz Counties have partnered to promote a Safe Driving awareness campaign aimed at Highway 17.

“Frequently when the roadway is congested, dark and wet, firefighters from every department surrounding the Highway 17 corridor are busy responding to accidents on the highway,” said Brian Glass, SCCFD Assistant Fire Chief. Those agencies include SCCFD and Cal Fire in Santa Clara County, and Cal Fire - Santa Cruz County Fire, Scotts Valley Fire District, Santa Cruz Fire Department, and Central Fire Protection District in Santa Cruz County. Ongoing work along Highway 17, including the Shaded Fuel Break project, has improved fire and roadway safety, but exposes work crews to the dangers of inattentive drivers. “The responsibility for safety on Highway 17 belongs to everyone,” said Cal Fire Battalion Chief Mike Mathiesen, who leads the Fuel Break project. “When drivers ignore warning signs and lane closures it puts our project crews in the same danger as our responders on the highway.”

With over 66,000 people commuting over the mountain highway each day, Highway 17 provides a vital link between Santa Cruz and Santa Clara counties. Accidents result in injuries and significant traffic delays. According to the California Highway Patrol, most collisions on Highway 17 are a direct result of unsafe speeds, following too closely and distracted driving. It is imperative drivers Slow Down, Pay Attention, and Watch for Responders. Recognize that speed limits are established for ideal driving conditions, not when the road is wet, congested or dark. Keep your eyes on the road and hands on the wheel, and avoid the use of cell phones, and other devices that distract from driving safely. Finally, when accidents do occur, watch for and listen to first responders.

The ‘Safe on 17’ campaign includes a series of three videos to remind the public of the danger of driving Highway 17 too fast, while distracted, and in the presence of first responders. The campaign videos and logos can be found at [www.sccfd.org/safeon17](http://www.sccfd.org/safeon17) and are available to be shared.

“Regardless of what side of the county line they call home, we want the public to be able to travel safely,” said Chief Glass. “And we want the first responders and crews who work on the highway to get home to their families safely at the end of the shift. With a common sense approach to driving on Highway 17, driving through the Santa Cruz mountains can be safer for everyone.”

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The Santa Clara County Fire Department is a California fire protection district serving Santa Clara County and the communities of Campbell, Cupertino, Los Altos, Los Altos Hills, Los Gatos, Monte Sereno, and Saratoga. For more information, please visit [www.sccfd.org](http://www.sccfd.org).