



NEWS RELEASE

Date: December 7, 2005
District: 4 - Oakland
Contact: Lauren Wonder, 510.286-6120

CALTRANS FIRST IN U.S. TO ADD SAFETY MESSAGES AND AMBER ALERTS TO HIGHWAY INFORMATION NUMBER

Oakland—Starting today, the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) will broadcast safety messages and Amber Alerts, in addition to the latest information about highway conditions, on the Caltrans Highway Information Network (CHIN) number (1-800-427-7623).

Caltrans is the first state transportation department in the nation to provide this service.

Callers dialing the toll-free CHIN number will be greeted with a brief highway safety message. The alternating message will remind motorists not to drink and drive, to use caution when driving in highway work zones, to wear seat belts, or obey the speed limit.

“Highway safety is our highest priority and using the CHIN will allow us to reach a large audience with the critical messages that slowing down, driving responsibly and exercising caution are matters of life and death,” said Caltrans Director Will Kempton.

“There is an increasing amount of road work on Bay Area highways. Construction is serious business and safety of the traveling public and construction workers is of the utmost importance,” said Bijan Sartipi, Caltrans District 4 Director. “Turning off your cell phone, paying attention to road conditions and slowing in construction zones are critical moves you can make to get you home safe and sound.”

The CHIN number received more than five million calls last year. Since the network was established in 1994, more than 62 million requests for highway condition information have been received.

If an Amber Alert is issued in California, callers will hear it, instead of a safety message, on the CHIN.

Kempton said providing Amber Alerts over the CHIN will encourage the public’s help in response to child abductions. The Amber Alerts on the CHIN will complement the 580 electronic message signs on state highways, which Caltrans currently uses to quickly send Amber Alerts.

Callers who want to bypass the safety message can enter in their route number to get the latest road condition information or dial 811 to get additional information about any active Amber Alerts in California.

###

