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Tennessee Remembers Victims of Impaired Driving

Law Enforcement Agencies warn drivers: Don't drive under the influence this holiday season

NASHVILLE, TN – Tennessee Department of Transportation Commissioner Gerald Nicely and Governor's Highway Safety Office Director Kendell Poole joined numerous state and local law enforcement agencies and safety advocates today to remind Tennesseans about the dangers of driving impaired this holiday season.

As a visual reminder of the severe result of impaired driving, Wednesday's news conference at the Millennium Maxwell House Hotel in Nashville was held in front of a Christmas tree adorned with 390 angels. The angels represented the 390 people who died in alcohol related crashes in Tennessee in 2007. Brad Bulla lost his son, Jed, in an underage drinking crash and was there to speak from experience of the devastation caused by drinking and driving. Brad added the angel to the tree to represent the loss of Jed.

Since 1981, every President of the United States has demonstrated his commitment to preventing impaired driving by proclaiming December "National Drunk and Drugged Driving (3D) Prevention Month" to help underscore the public's commitment to preventing impaired driving and promoting the use of designated drivers and sober ride programs. The month of December and the New Year's Eve holiday are also often highlighted by significant increases in state and local law enforcement efforts to combat impaired driving such as the use of sobriety checkpoints and saturation patrols.

"Alcohol, drugs and driving are a deadly mix, plain and simple," said Nicely. "Whether you've had one too many or way too many, it's not worth the risk of killing yourself or someone else by driving impaired. The safest rule is to never get behind the wheel of a vehicle when you're impaired."

Nearly 13,000 (12,998) people died in crashes that involved a drunk driver or motorcycle operator with a blood alcohol concentration of .08 or higher nationwide in 2007, making up 32 percent of all traffic fatalities. The 390 lives that were lost in DUI crashes in Tennessee also represent 32 percent of the state's traffic fatalities.

"The three most critical skills for a good, safe driver are judgment, vision and reaction," said Poole. "Alcohol suppresses all three of these critical driving skills, even before an individual has reached the legal limit. If you really want to enjoy the holidays, make sure your celebration is one you'll live to remember."

During 3D Prevention Month, law enforcement agencies across the state are increasing sobriety and safety checkpoints and are heightening patrols in support of the state's **Booze It and Lose It** campaign.

"We will be out in force making sure impaired drivers are off the road," said Tennessee Highway Patrol Colonel Mike Walker. "No amount of good cheer will be able to save you from the consequences of drunk driving. If we catch you, we will arrest you. No exceptions. No excuses."

(MORE)



By following these easy steps, drivers can enjoy a safe and festive holiday without placing their own lives and the lives of the others on the road at risk:

- Plan a safe way home before the festivities begin;
- Before drinking, please designate a sober driver and give that person your keys;
- If you're impaired, use a taxi, call a sober friend or family member, or use public transportation so you are sure to get home safely;
- If you happen to see a drunk driver on the road, don't hesitate to contact your local law enforcement;
- And remember, if you know someone who is about to drive or ride while impaired, take their keys and help them make other arrangements to get to where they are going safely.

“Saving lives on our roads is a top priority and we need everyone’s help to do it,” Poole added. “This holiday season don’t let your year end in an arrest or, even worse, death. Make smart decisions and plan ahead, so you can assure a safe way home.”

Whether you’ve had way too many or just one too many, it’s not worth the risk.

For more information, please visit www.StopImpairedDriving.org .

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