

December 3, 2009

## Tennessee Remembers Victims of Impaired Driving

*December is National Drunk and Drugged Driving Prevention Month*

**NASHVILLE, TN** – Tennessee Department of Transportation 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, 327 teddy bears lined the lobby of the Tennessee Performing Arts Center in remembrance of those killed in alcohol related crashes in 2008. After the ceremony the bears were given to Tennessee Child Passenger Safety Centers where they will be distributed to needy children.

"We have made great strides in reducing the number of people killed in alcohol related crashes in Tennessee but there is still much work to be done," said TDOT Commissioner Gerald Nicely. "If you drink this holiday, don't drive. It's not worth the risk of killing yourself or someone else by driving impaired."

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 commitment to preventing impaired driving and promoting the use of designated drivers and sober ride programs. People will see increased law enforcement efforts to combat impaired driving, such as sobriety checkpoints and saturation patrols, during the month of December and the New Year's holiday.

Nationally, 11,773 people died in crashes that involved a drunk driver or motorcycle operator with a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of .08 or higher in 2008, making up 32 percent of all traffic fatalities. Also, the 327 people killed in DUI crashes in Tennessee 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.

"The holidays are about gathering together with friends and family to celebrate the joys of the season, but no amount of good cheer will save people from the consequences of impaired driving," said Tennessee Highway Patrol Colonel Mike Walker. "Impaired driving is against the law and Troopers will be out in force working to save lives by making sure drunk and drugged drivers are kept off the road. If we catch you, we will arrest you. No exceptions. No excuses."

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;
- Designate a sober driver and give that person the keys before ever consuming a drink;

**(MORE)**



Tennessee Department of Transportation  
Governor's Highway Safety Office

Kendell Poole, GHSO Director  
615.741.2589 (office)

Julie Oaks, Public Information Officer  
615.741.2331 (office)

- 
- If impaired, use a taxi, call a sober driver, or use public transportation to get home safely;
  - If you see a drunk driver on the road contact local law enforcement or call \*THP (\*847);
  - If someone is about to drive or ride impaired, take their keys and make other arrangements to get them 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.”

For more information, please visit [www.StopImpairedDriving.org](http://www.StopImpairedDriving.org) .

###