

Increased patrols to snag drunk drivers during DUI crackdown

Written by Holyoke Enterprise
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The holiday rush is upon us, full of shopping and holiday parties at offices and homes across the state. If one plans to drink alcohol, the Colorado Department of Transportation, Colorado State Patrol and law enforcement agencies statewide want to remind everyone to plan ahead this holiday season with a sober designated driver. A holiday Heat Is On DUI crackdown continues across the state with increased patrols through New Year's Day.

Preliminary reports show there were five fatalities over the Thanksgiving holiday weekend; four of the five fatalities resulted from suspected alcohol/drug crashes. From Thanksgiving to New Year's last year in Colorado, 48 people were killed in traffic crashes. More than half of those killed were not wearing seatbelts; 18 died in alcohol-related crashes. More than 1,556 people were arrested for DUI during last year's holiday enforcement periods.

"The holiday season is a time for celebrating with co-workers, friends and families. Don't make the poor decision to drive after drinking alcohol," said Colonel James Wolfenbarger, chief of the Colorado State Patrol.

"That bad choice can wipe out your holiday shopping budget and could put your life and the lives of others at risk. If you choose to drink and drive, you will be arrested."

To remind Colorado motorists to celebrate responsibly, CDOT is behind a host of outreach efforts across the state. Clings and posters at liquor stores, restaurants, bathroom mirrors in bars, billboards, public service announcements, internet banners and even a Facebook video game will carry messages reminding Coloradans not to drink and drive.

"We want everyone to enjoy a safe and happy holiday season," said Don Hunt, executive director of the Colorado Department of Transportation. "So we are making a special effort to reach motorists with reminders to 'Plan Ahead' this holiday season with ads online and at locations where alcohol is served or sold."

Santa's reindeer will adorn bathroom mirror decals and internet banner ads to remind patrons to find a sober ride home if they've been drinking. The reindeer's message will read, "Don't drive if you're tipsy, buzzed or Blitzen. Call a cab or get a sober ride home."

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Billboards displayed around Denver will feature Santa with the message “He knows when you are drinking. He knows when you’re .08. Designate a Driver for Goodness Sake.”

CDOT’s media campaign was paid for with \$75,000 in federal funding from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

The campaign will also include a new animated web video featuring an office holiday party with Santa’s elves on CDOT’s newly launched Facebook page (www.facebook.com/coloradodot) In the midst of holiday party high jinks, one of the elves offers the best gift of all—to serve as the designated driver for his tipsy co-workers. Facebook users can actually become that elf in the game which allows players to navigate through Santa’s workshop, dodging beer mugs and champagne bottles while collecting car keys from the other elves.

As an incentive, everyone who plays the interactive Elf Game and “likes” CDOT’s Facebook page, can enter to win free ski lift tickets to Arapahoe Basin. Two tickets will be given away each week.

The Colorado Licensed Beverage Association, MillerCoors and Arapahoe Basin Ski Resort are all working with CDOT to help distribute holiday impaired driving prevention messages.

The average DUI in Colorado can cost up to \$10,270, loss of driver’s license for up to a year and loss of freedom. Plan ahead this holiday season to avoid a costly result. Overnight parking locations, sober ride information, holiday planning party tips and downloadable campaign materials can be found on the campaign website at www.PlanAheadColorado.com.

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