Throughout Colorado this summer, numerous law enforcement agencies, including the Colorado State Patrol, plan to repeat an aggressive effort to keep drunk drivers off streets and highways. The enforcement campaign is called “100 Days of Heat.”

The campaign includes sobriety checkpoints as well as increased patrols on roadways with a history of impaired driving crashes. Most people understand the need for increased DUI patrols, but there are often questions about sobriety checkpoints, even though they have been used in Colorado for more than 25 years.

Sobriety checkpoints can accomplish two goals: discouraging drinking drivers from getting behind the wheel in the first place and apprehending those who disobey the law, thereby endangering the lives of the rest of us.

Checkpoints are announced in advance through the media. If a checkpoint results in no DUI arrests, and there are no alcohol-related fatalities or crashes, we consider it a great success. Having to arrest no one at a checkpoint accomplishes one of our primary goals.

Are sobriety checkpoints constitutional? The U.S. Supreme Court says they are valid if conducted according to a strict protocol, and twice the Colorado Attorney General has issued opinions supporting the legality of checkpoints in Colorado.

Most checkpoints planned this summer are funded by federal grants through the Colorado Department of Transportation. Participating law enforcement agencies will hold 150 checkpoints during the summer because it is an especially deadly time of year, with over one-third of alcohol-related fatalities occurring between Memorial Day and Labor Day.

If you are a responsible driver, you have nothing to worry about a checkpoint. Checkpoints are purposely placed, and drivers are not stopped arbitrarily. Signs will notify drivers well in advance that they may be stopped delaying travel for a couple minutes. For those who are under the influence and arrested, they can plan to spend more than $10,000 for resolution of a typical case.

If you encounter a checkpoint this summer we apologize for the minor inconvenience, but we hope you keep in mind the 200 people killed every year in Colorado due to impaired driving.

Additionally, I would like to thank the vast majority of Colorado motorists who drive safely and make responsible decisions not to drive after consuming too much alcohol.

Remember, the “Heat is On” in Colorado. Please have a safe and happy summer!