



News

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NHTSA & Partners Announce Tough New Approach to Drunk Driving; Massive Ad Blitz & Enforcement Crackdown Target Male Drivers 21-34

As millions of Americans hit the roads at the height of the summer vacation season, the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, along with national partners, today launched the toughest and largest-ever enforcement crackdown on impaired drivers to help save more lives: *Drunk Driving. Over the Limit. Under Arrest.* The nationwide enforcement campaign begins Friday, August 18. To underscore the severity of the problem, NHTSA also released today final 2005 statistics for alcohol-related fatalities.

The new statistics show that in 2005, there were 12,945 fatalities in crashes involving a driver or motorcycle operator with a BAC of .08 or higher, the legal limit throughout the U.S. Fully 39 percent of all traffic deaths last year involved alcohol. All told, 16,885 people died in alcohol-related crashes. NHTSA also released state-by-state statistics for alcohol-related fatalities.

"We're taking the gloves off. This hard-hitting enforcement crackdown, coupled with a new nationwide advertising campaign, serve as a stern warning: If you drive drunk, you *will* be arrested," said NHTSA Administrator Nicole Nason.

The enforcement crackdown, including sobriety checkpoints and saturation patrols, as well as the advertising blitz, were announced at a news conference at the Montgomery County Police and Fire Training Academy in Rockville, Maryland. Those addressing the event included Administrator Nason, U.S. Acting Secretary of Transportation Maria Cino; U.S. Deputy Attorney General Paul J. McNulty; and top officials of NHTSA's three advocacy partnership organizations: The Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA); The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP); and MADD.

"Police agencies across the country are focused on the new national crackdown and are working with state highway safety offices in organizing strong and effective enforcement activities, as well as public information and advertising efforts," said Col. Jim Champagne of the Louisiana Highway Safety Commission and current GHSA chairman. IACP and MADD are joining with NHTSA and GHSA in actively promoting the national crackdown.

The crackdown, to begin Friday and run through Labor Day, is expected to involve thousands of local and state law enforcement agencies. In addition, Congress provided NHTSA \$11 million for national advertising time to intensify the impact of the enforcement drive. The new ads will begin airing immediately.

The new TV, radio and web ads, in both English and Spanish, will run nationally on programs viewed primarily by 21 to 34-year-old males, the demographic group at highest risk of causing death or dying in drunk driving crashes. Data released today for 2005 show that the highest percentage of drivers in fatal crashes who had a BAC of .08 or higher was for male drivers ages 21 to 34 (33 percent); followed by males age 35-44 (26 percent).

Glynn Birch, MADD's national president, said, "Sobriety checkpoints and roving patrols absolutely deter drunk drivers and save lives — especially when combined with aggressive advertising. We salute law enforcement in communities nationwide for their commitment to keeping the roadways safe for everyone."

"Drunk driving is dumb – and simply not worth the risk. Not only do you risk killing yourself or someone else, but the trauma and financial costs of a crash or an arrest can be significant. Refuse a sobriety test in many jurisdictions and you can lose your license on the spot and have your car impounded. Violators also face jail time, thousands of dollars in lawyers' fees, higher insurance rates and lost wages," said a top IACP official (TBD).

The BAC level of .08 is the point at which the fatal crash risk significantly increases and virtually everyone is seriously impaired. At that point, all of the critical driving skills are affected: braking, steering, lane changing, judgment and response time. The risk of a driver dying in a crash at .08 BAC is at least 11 times that of drivers without alcohol in their system.

According to NHTSA's new statistical report, drawn from the agency's Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS), 23 states and Puerto Rico showed a decrease in the number of alcohol-related fatalities between 2004 and 2005.

The Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA) is the states' voice on highway safety. The 501C3 association represents the highway safety programs of the states and territories on the "human behavioral aspects" of highway safety. Areas of focus include: occupant protection, impaired driving and speed enforcement, as well as motorcycle, school bus, pedestrian and bicycle safety, and traffic records.

The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) is the world's oldest and largest nonprofit membership organization of police executives, with over 20,000 members in over 89 countries. IACP's leadership consists of the operating chief executives serving the needs of the law enforcement community.

Founded in 1980, MADD is a 501C3 organization with about two million members and supporters, as well as 400 affiliates nationwide. MADD's mission is to stop drunk driving, support the victims of this violent crime, and prevent underage drinking.