

**HOLIDAY MINI-PLANNER (YDDYL)
SAMPLE OP-ED
484 WORDS**



THIS HOLIDAY SEASON, IF YOU CATCH A BUZZ, CATCH A RIDE
Designate a Sober Driver Before Every Holiday Party

Impaired driving is one of America's deadliest crimes. Nationally, more than 17,000 people died in alcohol-related highway crashes during 2003. Every 30 minutes, nearly 50 times a day, someone in America dies in an alcohol-related crash. Hundreds of thousands more are injured each year. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), about three in every ten Americans will be involved in an alcohol-related crash at some point in their lives.

That is why **[Organization Name]** is joining with other national, state and local highway safety and law enforcement officials to remind everyone this holiday season to always designate a sober driver before each holiday party or event involving alcohol.

The holiday season is supposed to be a time for family, friends, and festive celebrations, but it is unfortunately also a time when there is a tragic jump in the number of alcohol-related highway fatalities each year between Thanksgiving and New Year's.

Remembering to designate a sober driver before the party begins is just one of several, simple steps to help avoid a tragic crash or an arrest for impaired driving during the holiday season. Other reminders include:

- Never get behind the wheel of your vehicle if you've been out drinking;

- If impaired, call a taxi – use mass transit if available – or call a sober friend or family member to come and get you;

– more –

- Or, just stay where you are and sleep it off until you are sober;
- If you are hosting a party this holiday season, remind your guests to always plan ahead to designate a sober driver, always offer alcohol-free beverages during the event, and make sure all of your guests leave with a sober driver; and
- *Friends Don't Let Friends Drive Drunk.* Take the keys and never let a friend leave your sight if you think they are about to drive while impaired.

Since 1981, every President of the United States has proclaimed 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.

Driving impaired or riding with someone who is impaired is simply not worth the risk. The consequences are serious and real. Not only do you risk killing yourself or someone else, but the trauma and financial costs of a crash or an arrest for driving while impaired can be really significant and not the way you want to spend your holiday season.

So remember, this holiday season, if you catch a buzz, catch a ride.

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