



## ***Florida Department of Transportation***

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### **Florida Law Enforcement to Launch Statewide Crackdown on Impaired and Unsafe Driving** *Officers Vow to Arrest Everyone Found Driving ‘Over the Limit’*

**Tallahassee, Fla.** – Beginning today, law enforcement officers across Florida will aggressively look for and arrest anyone found driving while impaired. The effort is part of the annual, nationwide “*Drunk Driving. Over the Limit. Under Arrest.*” enforcement and outreach campaign. Florida joins law enforcement agencies throughout the country in support of the intensive crackdown on impaired driving, which will continue through the Labor Day holiday weekend.

“Driving while under the influence of drugs or alcohol can be a life altering mistake,” said Florida Department of Transportation Secretary Stephanie Kopelousos. “It’s a decision a sober person would never put in the hands of someone who has been drinking – yet that is exactly what you do if you fail to plan ahead. Think twice, and designate a sober driver.”

In 2008, the most recent year for which Florida data is available, there were more than 22,200 alcohol related crashes with more than 1,100 alcohol related fatalities and more than 15,700 alcohol related injuries across the state. Miami-Dade County lead the state with 1,898 alcohol related crashes and 85 alcohol related fatalities. For a complete list of county specific statistics, visit <http://www.flhsmv.gov/hsmvdocs/CS2008.pdf>.

“If we find you driving impaired, we will arrest you. No exceptions,” said said Dorene Thomas, chief of Pinellas Park Police Department and president of Florida Police Chiefs Association. “Even if you beat the odds and walk away from an impaired-driving crash alive, the consequences of driving while impaired can still virtually destroy your life.”

Violators often face jail time. They can lose their license, or be sentenced to use an ignition interlock. Their insurance rate goes up. Other financial hits include attorney fees, court costs, lost time at work, and the potential loss of job or job prospects. When family, friends, and co-workers find out, violators can also face tremendous personal embarrassment and humiliation.

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America's impaired-driving crisis is especially acute during summer months. Labor Day weekend in Florida is among the deadliest for drivers – last year 36 people were killed on Florida roads over the holiday weekend, and alcohol contributed to 12 of those deaths. In an effort to reduce casualties, law enforcement will be taking a “no tolerance” policy – drivers will be shown zero tolerance for being impaired, unbuckled, and/or speeding.

“Make no mistake. Our message is simple. No matter what you drive – a passenger car, pickup, sport utility vehicle or motorcycle – if we catch you driving impaired, we will arrest you. No exceptions. No excuses,” said Colonel John Czernis, director, Florida Highway Patrol. “We will be out in force conducting sobriety checkpoints and saturation patrols to get more drunk drivers off the road. We want everyone to play it safe and always designate a sober driver or find a different way home if they have been out drinking.”

In 2007 alone, nearly 13,000 people in the U.S. died in crashes in which the drivers or motorcycle riders were legally impaired, according to the latest statistics available from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Most of these individuals were innocent victims of crashes that could have been avoided if the impaired driver had simply made the decision to not drink and drive.

“When an impaired driver gets behind the wheel they endanger their own lives and the lives of everyone around them. The Sheriffs of Florida will be joining forces with other law enforcement agencies to curtail these tragedies,” said W.O. “Bill” Farmer, Jr., Sumter County Sheriff and president of the Florida Sheriff's Association. “Please, do not add to the dangers on our highways. Designate a driver if you choose to drink at events over the holiday weekend.”

It is illegal in every state to drive with a blood alcohol concentration of .08 grams per deciliter or higher. More than 10,000 police agencies will participate in this year's mid-August through Labor Day crackdown, including law enforcement officers representing every state, the District of Columbia, and many U.S. cities and towns.

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### ***About Drunk Driving. Over the Limit. Under Arrest.***

*The national Drunk Driving. Over the Limit. Under Arrest. impaired driving crackdown is a prevention program organized by the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration that focuses on combining high-visibility enforcement with heightened public awareness through advertising and publicity. For more information, visit [www.Stopimpaireddriving.org](http://www.Stopimpaireddriving.org).*