



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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'Tis the Season to Drive Sober: Plan Ahead This Holiday Season

Barre, VT — During this busy winter holiday season, the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), the Vermont Agency of Transportation's State Highway Safety Office, and Vermont law enforcement agencies are teaming up to remind drivers to *Drive Sober* this holiday season. State and local law enforcement will be participating in a high-visibility impaired driving awareness campaign from December 13, 2024, through January 1, 2025. In support of the law enforcement community's dedication to protecting the lives of residents in their communities, drivers will see an increase of officers working together during the holiday season to take impaired drivers off the roads.

Alcohol-impaired driving is deadly and continues to be a major factor in fatal traffic crashes in the United States, especially during the holidays. During the month of December in the five-year period spanning 2018-2022, there were 4,759 people killed nationwide in alcohol-impaired-driving crashes. In December 2022, 1,062 people died in alcohol-impaired-driving crashes. Males and young people are at greatest risk for injury or fatality. In December 2022, drunk male drivers were involved in fatal crashes at a higher rate (22%) than female drivers (16%), and young drivers ages 21-34 accounted for the highest percentage (25%) of alcohol-impaired drivers involved in fatal traffic crashes.

In Vermont, from 2019 to 2023, 56% of all fatal vehicle crashes involved an impaired driver (impaired includes both drugs and alcohol), and 237 children were involved in crashes with impaired drivers. During that same period, 341 serious injuries and 185 fatalities occurred in Vermont from impaired driving. In 2023, there were 42 fatalities involving an impaired driver. In the State of Vermont, you are 11.1% more likely to be seriously injured or killed in a car crash if the crash involves an impaired driver.

"Impaired driving should never be an option for getting home," said Major David Petersen of Vermont State Police. "We want our community to have a joy-filled holiday season, but we want everyone to do so responsibly, and that means refraining from drinking and driving. There are many good choices for a safe ride home. Please use them."

Drivers should be safe during the holidays by planning ahead if they intend to drink. They should not wait until after drinking to plan how to get somewhere. Impairment clouds judgment. Drivers should secure a designated sober driver before they partake in drugs or alcohol.

“Please plan ahead this holiday season, and be sure to have a sober ride home,” said Vermont DMV Commissioner Andrew Collier. “Enjoy your holidays and good times with your friends and family, but please do your part to help keep everyone safe on the road.”

If a driver finds they are unable to drive, they should give their keys to a sober driver so that person can get them home safely. When someone has been drinking and is considering driving, that person’s friends should be proactive, take away the keys, and help them get a sober ride home. If anyone sees a drunk driver, call 911.

For more information on impaired driving, visit www.nhtsa.gov/risky-driving/drunk-driving and <https://drivewell.vermont.gov/impaired-driving/>.

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