



TxDOT's six goals: Prepare for the future; Enhance safety; Maintain the transportation system; Relieve congestion; Enhance connectivity; Work with our partners to identify funding strategies

TxDOT Says There's No Excuse for Drinking and Driving Officers to Work Overtime During Labor Day Annual DWI Crackdown

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To access campaign photos and video, visit:
<http://www.sherrymatthews.com/txdotdwi/photorelease.html>

AUSTIN, TX — State officials say excuses won't protect impaired drivers from being arrested during the annual Labor Day DWI crackdown.

The Texas Department of Transportation and the Texas Department of Public Safety say drivers who rationalize with excuses like "I can hold my liquor," or "I'm fine to drive," or "I'll take the back roads home" face an expensive fine, losing their license, and jail time if they are convicted of driving while intoxicated.

Thousands of state troopers, police officers, and sheriffs' deputies across the state will be out in force as part of the *Drink, Drive, Go to Jail* stepped-up enforcement effort and public awareness campaign which begins August 19 and runs through Labor Day.

"It comes down to making the right choices and planning ahead if you are going to drink," said Carol Rawson, TxDOT's Traffic Operations Division Director. "No matter how good your excuse may seem at the time, it won't save you when an officer pulls you over. We're reminding people that drinking and driving is a crime with serious consequences and warning them that more officers will be on the streets looking for impaired drivers."

Convicted first-time DWI offenders can pay a fine of up to \$2,000, lose their driver's license for up to a year and serve as much as 180 days in jail. Safety officials say other costs associated with an impaired driving arrest and conviction can add up to as much as \$17,000 or more for bail, legal fees, court appearances, court-ordered classes, vehicle insurance increases, and other expenses.

The Texas Department of Public Safety has a zero tolerance policy for drinking and driving. Director Steven McCraw said, "If you are driving and found to be impaired, you will be arrested."

In 2010, there were 25,032 alcohol-related crashes in Texas that resulted in 1,057 deaths and 16,877 injuries. In 2010, 24 percent of people killed in alcohol-related crashes in Texas were between the ages of 20 and 25, though that age group represents only 9 percent of the overall state population. More alcohol-related crashes occur between 2 a.m. and 3 a.m. than any other hour of the day. Also, more alcohol related crashed occurred on Saturday than any other day of the week.

Safety advocates are urging drivers to consider a variety of alternatives to getting behind the wheel if they've been drinking. They suggest calling a cab, asking a friend or a family member for a ride, handing keys to a designated driver, or simply stay put until the driver sobers up. TxDOT's digital RideFinder at www.TexasDWI.org, accessible from smart phones, lists ride options in local areas throughout Texas.

To alert motorists about the DWI crackdown, TxDOT is conducting a multi-media public awareness campaign that includes television spots, radio ads, billboards, web and mobile phone ads, and safe driving reminders in metropolitan bar and restaurant districts.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the Texas Department of Public Safety, the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission, and Mothers Against Drunk Driving are joining TxDOT and local law enforcement as partners for the *Drink. Drive. Go to Jail* campaign.

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*For more information, contact the TxDOT media relations office
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The Texas Department of Transportation

The Texas Department of Transportation is responsible for maintaining 80,000 miles of road and for supporting aviation, rail and public transportation across the state. TxDOT and its approximately 12,000 employees strive to empower local leaders to solve local transportation problems, and to use new financial tools, including tolling and public-private partnerships, to reduce congestion and pave the way for future economic growth while enhancing safety, improving air quality and preserving the value of the state's transportation assets. Find out more at www.txdot.gov. Fan us on Facebook www.facebook.com/txdot. Follow us on Twitter www.twitter.com/txdot.