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DEPARTMENT OF SAFETY

Office of Highway Safety

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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VIDEO OF THIS MORNING'S PRESS CONFERENCE IS AVAILABLE FOR NEWS MEDIA USE: youtu.be/pdynmvwdcqe

NEWS RELEASE

STATE, COUNTY AND LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT PARTICIPATING IN IMPAIRED DRIVING ENFORCEMENT EFFORT BEGINNING ON THANKSGIVING EVE

CONCORD, New Hampshire – This morning, the New Hampshire Office of Highway Safety (NHOHS), along with law enforcement partners from New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and Maine, announced a collaborative effort to deter impaired driving and discourage excessive drinking on Thanksgiving Eve, commonly known as “Drinksgiving” or “Blackout Wednesday”.

Beginning tomorrow and continuing through Sunday, law enforcement officers from state, county and local agencies are assigning specific patrols to find and arrest impaired drivers. The effort is funded by the U.S. Department of Transportation’s National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) through grants issued by the NHOHS.

“We are urging everyone to make the right choice and to refuse to drink and drive,” said New Hampshire Office of Highway Safety spokesperson Tyler Dumont at a Tuesday press conference.

In 2021, there were 118 people killed in crashes on New Hampshire roads. Of those crashes, nearly 70% were alcohol and/or drug related.

“You have a choice to get behind the wheel or not,” said Rochester, NH resident Karen Bowen, a survivor of impaired driving. “This is not an accident.”

“In these upcoming days, if you do choose to travel, we ask you to take some certain precautions. Simply, plan ahead. Give yourself plenty of time to get from point A to point B. Don’t rush and don’t crowd others on the drive over to where you’re going,” said New Hampshire State Police Lt. Joseph Ronci, Commander of Troop A. “If you do choose to drink, please designate a driver ahead of time.”

“We will be deploying additional patrols over the next week focusing on impaired, dangerous and distracted drivers who are creating hazards and potentially causing crashes on our highways,” said Massachusetts State Police Capt. Kathryn Downey. “Last year, we lost 33 lives in Massachusetts on the roadways during the month of November. 284 people were seriously injured just in that month alone. That’s too many.”

“This is a very deadly weekend on Maine roads as well. Just last year, we had three fatalities – one of which was alcohol-related on Thanksgiving weekend,” said Maine State Police Spc. Seth Allen.

No one is immune to the effects of drinking. The NHOHS encourages residents and visitors to always make a plan to get home safely before they drink by designating a sober driver or using a taxi or rideshare app. Anyone who sees a potential drunk driver on the road should dial 911 immediately.

NEW HAMPSHIRE STATISTICS (Source: New Hampshire Department of Safety, Division of Motor Vehicles)

- There have been seven deadly crashes on New Hampshire roads during the Thanksgiving holiday period (Wednesday to Sunday of the week of Thanksgiving) over the last 5 years.
- Of the seven deadly crashes that occurred during Thanksgiving holiday periods from 2018 to 2022, seven people were killed and 13 were hurt. Impairment was a factor in four of the seven crashes.
- A total of 2,336 crashes occurred on New Hampshire roads during Thanksgiving holiday periods from 2018 to 2022.

NATIONAL STATISTICS (Source: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration/NHTSA)

- Approximately one-third of fatalities in motor vehicle traffic crashes in the United States involve drunk drivers (with BACs at or above .08 g/dL). In 2021, there were 13,384 people killed in drunk-driving crashes.
- Although it’s illegal to drive when impaired by alcohol, in 2021, one person was killed every 39 minutes in a drunk-driving crash on our nation’s roads.
- The financial impact from impaired-driving crashes is devastating: Based on 2019 numbers (the most recent year for which cost data is available), alcohol-related motor vehicle crashes cost the United States \$57 billion annually.

MAKE A PLAN. GET HOME SAFELY.

- Always drive 100% sober. Even one alcoholic beverage could be one too many.
- Make a plan: Before you have even one drink, designate a sober driver to get you home safely. If you wait until you’ve been drinking to make this decision, you might not make the best one.
- You have options to get home safely: designate a sober driver or call a taxi or rideshare. Getting home safely is always worth it.
- If it’s your turn to be the designated driver, take your job seriously and don’t drink.
- If you see a drunk driver on the road, call 911.
- If you have a friend who is about to drink and drive, take the keys away and let a sober driver get your friend home safely.

The NHOHS thanks all agencies and their members who are participating in this effort to protect lives and take impaired drivers off the roads.

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