

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Training program helps authorities work through complexities of DWI arrests**

BATON ROUGE – To the average person a DWI arrest and prosecution may seem simple and routine, but the entire process is a complex procedure that if not done exactly right can result in the offender getting off without any penalty. To help police, district attorneys and others involved in the process, the Louisiana Highway Safety Commission is funding special DWI training courses across Louisiana.

Louisiana law enforcement officers make about 25,000 DWI arrests per year. Each arrest and prosecution involves a complex array of steps that must be performed according to laws and regulations and safe practices. Failing to perform these steps correctly can result in a wide set of consequences ranging from endangering the arresting officer's life to the arrest being dismissed in court.

Lt. Col. John LeBlanc, executive director of the Louisiana Highway Safety Commission, explains that the training courses funded by the Commission help police and prosecutors navigate through what has become an increasingly complex process.

"A DWI arrest requires officers to complete multi-page forms that involve dozens of issues that must be addressed," LeBlanc said. "This process is designed so that officers make arrests that are strong when brought up in court while not violating the rights of suspects. The training involves the earliest steps in a DWI arrest through the suspect's appearance in court."

The training is coordinated by Dr. Marie Walsh, who heads the Louisiana Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP), an organization dedicated to providing assistance, training and outreach to local transportation agencies across the state. The course titled "Impaired Driving Workshop for Law Enforcement Agencies—Building the DWI Case," is conducted in communities across the state. The Louisiana Department of Public Safety, State Police and Louisiana District Attorneys Association also participate in the training. So far approximately 180 people have completed the training course.

"The responses from most of the participants in the training classes indicate a desire and a need for ongoing learning opportunities related to impaired driving," Walsh said. "I believe that a comprehensive and strategic approach to providing timely training and outreach, technical assistance and evaluation of these programs is necessary to help Louisiana accomplish our goal of eliminating impaired driving related fatalities."-

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