



LOUISIANA HIGHWAY SAFETY COMMISSION NEWS RELEASE

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Most holiday vehicle fatalities in Louisiana involve a drunk driver

Since 2013 in Louisiana, more than 70 percent of all vehicle fatalities during the holidays involved a drunk driver, a staggering statistic that emphasizes the scope of the impaired driving problem in our state.

The Louisiana Highway Safety Commission, in partnership with law enforcement agencies across the state, is working to get drunk drivers off the road this holiday season through "Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over," a national high-visibility enforcement campaign designed to get drunk and drugged drivers off the roads. The "Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over" campaign is currently running and will continue through January 1, 2019.

"In the last five years, 139 people across Louisiana have died in vehicle crashes during the Christmas and New Year's Eve holiday period," LHSC Executive Director Lisa Freeman said. "Of those fatalities, 99 were killed in a crash involving a drunk driver. If you're caught driving while impaired by alcohol or drugs in Louisiana, law enforcement will have zero tolerance."

In 2017, 1,389 people were injured and 15 were killed across Louisiana in vehicle crashes during the Christmas and New Year's Eve holiday, according to statistics from the Highway Safety Research Group at LSU. About 12 percent of those injuries were from crashes that involved drunk drivers and 9 of the 15 fatalities involved alcohol.

December has been designated by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration as National Impaired Driving Prevention Month to underscore the importance of combating all forms of impaired driving. Although impaired driving statistics traditionally measure only alcohol-impaired drivers, the LHSC and NHTSA are now sounding the alarm for drug impaired driving, which is a growing problem in Louisiana.

"The Louisiana State Police Crime Lab is seeing a lot of cases involving drivers who are drug-impaired, and it's often because of prescription drugs," Freeman said. "A drug does not have to be illegal for it to have detrimental effects if it is abused. Law enforcement officers are trained to identify alcohol- and drug-impaired drivers, so when we say, 'Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over,' we're not just talking about alcohol anymore."

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