



LOUISIANA HIGHWAY SAFETY COMMISSION NEWS RELEASE

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Impaired driving has “no place in our lives” during Carnival season

Even though the floats and parades have been sidelined by the pandemic, people in Louisiana surely will find a way to celebrate Carnival. For too many, that may include drinking and driving, which could have consequences far beyond the Lenten season.

“Carnival is part of Louisiana’s cultural DNA, but driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs has no place in our lives at any time of year,” said Lisa Freeman, executive director of the Louisiana Highway Safety Commission. “If your holiday plans involve drinking or taking substances that may alter or impair your judgment and motor skills, make sure you have an alternate plan for safely getting home.”

LHSC also reminds drivers that law enforcement agents across Louisiana will be watching for impaired drivers in a special “Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over” period through February 19. During the 2019 Carnival season in Louisiana, 5 people were killed and 77 were injured in alcohol-related crashes, according to the Center for Analytics and Research in Transportation Safety at LSU.

Very recently, two young children were killed in crashes where driver impairment was suspected, according to Louisiana law enforcement officials. The tragic consequences of impaired driving are all too familiar and devastating to Bridget Gardner, a registered nurse specializing in injury prevention in the trauma program at University Medical Center New Orleans.

“Far too many times, communities and families suffer for a lifetime due to a lack of commitment to drive sober,” Gardner said, suggesting that everyone in Louisiana ask their family members “commit to never drive impaired and never get into the vehicle with an impaired driver.”

Gardner recognizes the value of reaching out to friends and family to prevent such tragedies, since “there is no turning back the clock.”

“We want you to enjoy the holiday while taking COVID precautions. Most importantly, we want to make sure you’re around for next year’s Mardi Gras, and we know your friends and family want that, too.” Freeman said. “That’s why we want everyone to commit to getting a designated driver, because friends and family don’t let loved ones drive drunk.”

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