

Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over National Kickoff

James Owens, Acting Administrator

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AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY

Good morning, thank you for joining us for this important event. I'm honored to stand alongside these traffic safety leaders, especially Kansas' Secretary of Transportation, Julie Lorenz.

Over the next few weeks, millions will hit the road to spend the holidays with family, visit friends' houses for parties, or drive home after an office Christmas party. Sadly, what should be one of the happiest times of the year will end in tragedy for too many families due to impaired driving.

In December 2018, 839 people lost their lives in traffic crashes involving a drunk driver. That means thousands of their families and friends will be spending the holidays this year with an empty seat around their table.

Nationally, impaired driving crashes take more than 10,000 lives a year, and approximately one third of all traffic crash fatalities involve a drunk driver. In Kansas City, Kansas, and Kansas City, Missouri, 160 lives were lost in alcohol-impaired- driving crashes from 2014 to 2018.

All of these crashes were completely preventable. There is no reason and no excuse for driving impaired.

So, my message today is simple: If you have been drinking or using impairing drugs, do not get behind the wheel. Arrange for a sober driver, call a cab, or use a ride-hailing service. Don't gamble with your life — or the lives of others on the road.

If you do drink and drive, law enforcement officers — like the ones here today — will be looking for you. President Trump has declared December as National Impaired Driving Prevention Month. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration is proud to have the support of law enforcement agencies across the country for our high-visibility enforcement campaign: "Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over."

From December 11 to January 1, you'll see a number of ads reminding everyone not to drive impaired. These ads also reinforce the message that impaired driving has additional consequences: a criminal record, financial penalties, and loss of a job or social status.

For the second year in a row, we're also accompanying our alcohol-impaired message with our drug-impaired driving campaign, "If You Feel Different, You Drive Different. Drive High, Get a DUI."

Many drugs can impair a person's ability to drive safely, including certain over-the-counter and prescription medications.

We also know that marijuana use can impair a driver's ability to react and make safe decisions behind the wheel.

NHTSA is spending \$8 million on this campaign on television, radio, and digital media. We want everyone to know: If you drive impaired, you will get caught. I want to thank the U.S. Secretary of Transportation, Elaine Chao, for her support for this important project.

We hope you will all join us in spreading the word this holiday season: Drive Sober Or Get Pulled Over.