

NHTSA Reminds Holiday Revelers to Drive Sober

Releases new data on alcohol, drug-impaired driving

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The U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration is kicking off its annual holiday season impaired-driving campaign, raising awareness of the dangers of driving while impaired by alcohol or drugs.

Addressing drivers' risky behavior is one of the five elements of the USDOT's National Roadway Safety Strategy, which also includes an emphasis on safer roads, safer vehicles, safer speeds and better post-crash care.

NHTSA also released the findings of a [new study](#) on [drug and alcohol use by road users](#) involved in serious and fatal crashes. The data shed new light on the prevalence of drug and alcohol involvement in serious crashes, just as one of the deadliest seasons for impaired driving gets underway.

The high-visibility enforcement campaign begins December 14 and runs through January 1. In December 2020, traffic crashes involving an impaired driver killed 937 people.

"Making a plan for a safe, sober ride home is critical to saving lives this holiday season," said NHTSA Acting Administrator Ann Carlson. "I urge everyone to do their part to end these preventable tragedies by always driving sober, designating a sober driver, using public transportation or calling a taxi or ride-hailing service."

To continue to educate drivers throughout the holiday season, NHTSA will be promoting the following messages: [Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over and If You Feel Different, You Drive Different; Drive High, Get a DUI](#). The campaign is supported by a \$13.2 million national media buy, which includes TV, radio, and digital ads in English and Spanish. The agency is also debuting new [English](#) and [Spanish](#) TV commercials focusing on drug-impaired driving.

As part of the high-visibility enforcement efforts, law enforcement officers nationwide will be going the extra mile in their communities from December 14 through January 1 to get impaired drivers off the roads, with efforts such as sobriety checkpoints and community outreach.

NHTSA's newly published report, Alcohol and Drug Prevalence Among Seriously or Fatally Injured Road Users [[link to final report](#)], takes a closer look at the pervasiveness of alcohol and drug use in serious and fatal crashes. The study – which included participation from seven Level 1 trauma centers across the country – examined the prevalence of alcohol and legal, prescription and illegal drugs in the blood of a large sample of seriously or fatally injured drivers and other crash victims, including bicyclists and pedestrians.

The study found:

- Fifty-six percent of seriously or fatally injured road users tested positive for alcohol, or some type of drug known to have potentially impairing effects.
- The presence of cannabinoids (25%) and alcohol (23%) were most prevalent, followed by stimulants (11%) and opioids (9%).

- The presence of two or more drugs was reported in 18% of cases with serious injuries and 32% of the fatalities.

Driving impaired by any substance – alcohol or other drugs, whether legal or illegal – is against the law in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. To prevent unnecessary tragedies, NHTSA urges everyone to plan ahead, especially when celebrating the holidays, and to never drive drunk or high. Instead, designate a sober driver, use public transportation, or call a ride-hailing service or taxi to make sure you get home safely. Remember to check the availability of sober ride programs in your community. If you see an impaired driver on the road, call 911.

Contact:

NHTSA

NHTSA Media NHTSAmidia@dot.gov 202-366-9550