

Drive Sober Campaign Kickoff

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AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY

Good morning and thank you to everyone joining us in person and online. I'm Ann Carlson, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's Acting Administrator, and I appreciate you joining us for today's very important event.

Impaired driving is both illegal and dangerous, yet too many drivers take the wheel after drinking or using impairing drugs. The campaign we're kicking off today has a simple message: *Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over*.

Impaired driving is 100% preventable, but it still takes far too many lives every year. In 2021, 13,384 people lost their lives in alcohol-impaired-driving crashes.

This message is critical right now because impaired driving is on the rise. On average, one person was killed every 39 minutes in 2021 due to impaired driving. In 2020, that number was one person every 45 minutes. This is a disturbing trend.

Alcohol-impaired-driving fatalities increased by more than 14% from 2020 to 2021 and increased by 15% from 2019 to 2020. These double-digit increases should alarm every single one of us.

Another statistic is particularly alarming: Two-thirds of drunk driving crash fatalities nationally in 2021 involved a driver with a blood alcohol level of .15 or more, nearly twice the legal limit of impairment.

In New York State, 64% of all impaired-driving crash fatalities in 2021 were at .15 or higher. It's the same rate in New Jersey, and 65% in Connecticut.

It's terrifying to know that we're sharing the roads every day with impaired drivers, many of whom are two times or more over the legal limit. That's why this campaign is so vitally important: We're educating drivers to plan ahead and always arrange for a sober ride home, and we are working with law enforcement to take impaired drivers off our roads.

We launch this campaign every year before Labor Day because we know that the summer months tend to be more dangerous on the roads. In August 2021, drunk driving accounted for nearly one-third of all traffic crash fatalities – and all of these fatalities could have been avoided had an impaired driver made the choice not to get behind the wheel.

Our *Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over* message is supported by a \$13.8 million national paid media campaign, using TV, radio, digital, and social media to educate drivers.

It also includes a national law enforcement mobilization, with law enforcement officers working with their communities from August 18 through September 4 to identify and prevent impaired driving. And we join together with our vital partners in the law enforcement community in our shared commitment to conduct enforcement activities equitably and fairly. After all, the goal is to save lives.

Motorcycle riders comprised the largest percentage of alcohol-impaired drivers involved in fatal crashes in 2021, so we're reaching them with our *Ride Sober or Get Pulled Over* message.

We are also educating drivers about drugs other than alcohol that can make someone unsafe to drive. These include prescription and over-the-counter medicines, illegal drugs, and marijuana. Driving impaired by any substance, including marijuana, is illegal in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. That's the root of our two other campaign messages: *If You Feel Different, You Drive Different* and *Drive High, Get a DUI*.

All of these campaigns make it clear that driving impaired is a choice and 100% preventable. Plan ahead and leave your car at home. Or if you find yourself already out, call a cab, book a rideshare, have a sober friend drive you home, or spend the night where you are.

This advice is true if you are drinking anything – whether you're barely over the legal limit or you have had way too much to drink.

Alcohol impairs your ability to drive, plain and simple. And many different strategies can help you to avoid impaired driving – and to avoid becoming a statistic.