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## **N e w s      R e l e a s e**

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### **Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over**

Louisiana law enforcement agencies are joining forces December 18th – January 3rd to combat the high number of drunk-driving-related crashes in the weeks leading up to the Christmas and New Year's holidays.

December was one of the deadliest months on Louisiana roadways in 2013, with 55 fatal crashes and 59 persons killed, according to preliminary figures. During the four days comprising the Christmas and New Year's holidays, at least 11 people were killed and 400 injured in Louisiana highway crashes. Alcohol use was a factor in more than half of the fatalities.

*The Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over* campaign is a state and national campaign aimed at keeping impaired drivers off of the roadways and reducing deadly crashes. The Louisiana Highway Safety Commission is coordinating the statewide campaign by providing grants to local law enforcement agencies and the Louisiana State Police to fund overtime patrols and checkpoints.

"Getting arrested for DWI – or worse, causing a tragic accident – is not a Christmas memory you would ever want. If you're drinking, don't drive. Besides the risk of a crash, *Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over* means there will be a greater police presence and a much higher chance that you'll get caught," said Lt. Col. John LeBlanc, executive director of the Louisiana Highway Safety Commission.

"The holidays are a special time with family and friends. Enjoy this time, but be mindful that drinking and driving can change things in an instance. Think twice before getting behind the wheel," said St. Charles Parish Sheriff Greg Champagne.

Last year in Louisiana, police made 21,680 DWI arrests. Alcohol was a factor in 42 percent of Louisiana fatal crashes in 2013, with young males at particular risk. Although it is illegal for anyone under 21 to consume alcohol in Louisiana, the alcohol-related crash rate for 18-to-20-year-old drivers in 2013 was about twice the average of drivers of all groups. The same was true for drivers killed in alcohol-related crashes.

Louisiana laws provide significant penalties for impaired drivers, especially repeat offenders. One law imposes 15-day jail sentences on people caught driving while their licenses are suspended for a previous DWI violation. Another measure suspends, for one year, licenses of suspects who refuse to take a blood alcohol concentration test. A 2008 law requires some DWI offenders to install ignition interlocks in their vehicles. A first-offense DWI arrest can cost a driver thousands in fines, court costs, attorneys' fees, and increased insurance premiums.