



City of Missoula
Police Department
Press Release

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**Missoula Police Department Participates in 20-Day Campaign
to Catch Drunk Drivers
*Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over***

The Missoula Police Department, the Missoula County Sheriff's Office and the Montana Highway Patrol in the Missoula area will ramp up their enforcement efforts as part of a national crackdown on drunk driving. The 20-day, high-visibility campaign, *Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over*, is a partnership with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to curb impaired driving and save lives. From Aug. 21 to Sept. 7 (Labor Day), Missoula police will join law enforcement partners nationwide in showing zero tolerance for drunk driving. Increased state and national messaging about the dangers of driving drunk, coupled with checkpoints and increased officers on the road, aim to drastically reduce the toll of drunk driving.

That toll is large: In 2013, drunk-driving crashes killed 10,076 people, causing almost one-third of all traffic fatalities. Thirty-eight percent of crash fatalities on Labor Day weekend that year involved drunk drivers (with blood alcohol concentrations [BACs] of .08 or higher), amounting to 161 lives lost. And we're not just talking about a little bit of alcohol, either: More than a quarter (27%) of the crash fatalities that occurred on Labor Day weekend involved drivers with BACs of .15 or higher—almost twice the illegal per se limit.

"Too many people think their actions don't affect anybody else," said Sergeant Greg Amundsen of the Missoula Police Department. "They know it's illegal. They know it's wrong. But they do it anyway – they make decisions as if those statistics just can't happen to them."

The reality is, people aren't invincible. Of the 10,076 people who were killed in impaired-driving crashes in 2013, 65 percent were the drunk drivers themselves. Those 6,515 drunk drivers planned on making it to their destinations, but they didn't.

In every state, it's illegal to drive with a BAC of .08 or higher. Amundsen reminds Missoula area drivers that it's not a recommendation; it's the law. And during the enforcement period starting Aug. 21, there will be a special emphasis on drunk-driving enforcement. Local drivers should expect to see more patrol vehicles, DUI checkpoints, and increased messaging about this reckless, preventable crime. "The number of people who are still drinking and driving is unacceptable," Amundsen said. "Yes, we want to increase awareness for the campaign, but we want the effects to be permanent."

NHTSA data shows that repeat offenders are an especially dangerous facet of the drunk-driving problem. In the months of August from 2009 to 2013, almost 1 out of 10 (8 percent) of the drunk drivers involved in fatal crashes had already been convicted of at least one drunk-driving offense.

Drunk driving is preventable.

"All it takes is a little planning ahead," Amundsen said. "Designate a sober driver, use U Dash or call a cab. But whatever you do, don't drink and drive."

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