

PRESS RELEASE

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Buzzed Driving is Drunk Driving This Holiday Season

Jackson, Michigan— “The holiday season between Thanksgiving and New Year’s can be one of the deadliest and most dangerous times of the year due to an increase in impaired driving,” said Kelsey Winston, Jackson County Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition Coordinator. In December of 2007, 992 people nationally were killed in traffic crashes that involved at least one driver or motorcyclists with a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of .08 or higher.¹ In Jackson County in 2007, there were **6** alcohol related deaths and **98** alcohol related injuries in traffic crashes.²



That’s why the Jackson County Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition (JCSAPC) is joining with national, state and local highway safety officials to remind everyone who will be celebrating during the Holidays that *Buzzed Driving is Drunk Driving* and to always plan a safe way home before the festivities begin.

“The consumption of alcohol, drugs and driving just don’t mix,” says Sgt. Rob Jenks, Jackson Police Department. “Whether you’ve had way too many or just one too many, it’s not worth the risk of killing yourself or someone else.” Don’t ever get behind a wheel of a vehicle when you are impaired,” Winston encourages and reminds, “the legal age for drinking in Michigan is 21 no matter what time of year it is.”

Following these easy steps, a driver can enjoy a safe and festive holiday without jeopardizing their life and the lives of others on the road:

- Plan a safe way home before the festivities begin;
- Before drinking, please designate a sober driver and give that person your keys;
- If you’re impaired, use a taxi, call a sober friend or family member, or use public transportation so you are sure to get home safely;
- Use Jackson’s Dial-a-Ride program on New Year’s Eve (517) 788-8410 (11 p.m. to 4 a.m.)
- If you happen to see a drunk driver on the road, don’t hesitate to contact your local law enforcement;
- And remember, if you know someone who is about to drive while impaired, take their keys and help them make other arrangements to get to where they are going safely.

Sheriff Dan Heyns reminds us, "During the holiday season, every law enforcement agency in Jackson County renews their pledge to take drunk drivers off the roads. We do this by increasing our patrols and enforcing a zero tolerance policy. Don't let your life be ruined by an alcohol related arrest or accident during the holidays. This is a season for celebration not tragedy." “We will be out in force making sure drunk drivers are off the road,” said Lt. Christopher Simpson from Patrol Operation in Jackson Police Department. “If we catch you driving impaired, we will arrest you. No exceptions. No excuses. Saving lives on our roads is a top priority.”

Make smart decisions and plan ahead so you can assure a safe way home.

¹ National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA)

² 2007 Michigan Annual Drunk Driving Audit

More information about:

- Driving Drunk, please visit www.StopImpairedDriving.org
- *Jackson County Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition* and its activities, please contact Kelsey Winston at (517) 796-5133 or via email at kwinston@uwjackson.org
- Dial-a-Ride, please contact *Jackson Transportation Authority*, (517) 788-7844

Additional Facts:

- In 2006, there were 1,111 operating under the influence of intoxicating liquors (DUI) arrests in Jackson County.
- It is illegal in every state to drive with a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of .08 or higher.
- It is illegal in Michigan to furnish underage youth with alcohol. Violators can and have been prosecuted in Jackson County in recent years.
- This Holiday season, law enforcement will be cracking down on drunk drivers with zero tolerance.
- Since 1981, every President of the United States has demonstrated the commitment to the prevention of impaired driving by proclaiming December as National Drunk & Drugged Driving (3D) Prevention Month.
- Violators often face jail time, the loss of their driver's license, higher insurance rates, and dozens of other unanticipated expenses—including attorney's fees, court costs, car towing, repairs, and lost work time.
- Remember, too, there are also many intangible costs of a drunk driving arrest—including the embarrassment and humiliation of informing family, friends and employers.
- The Dial-a-Ride program is sponsored Allegiance Health System, Anderson Distributing Company, Jackson Citizen Patriot, Jackson County Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition, Jackson Transportation Authority, and United Way of Jackson County.