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IMPAIRED DRIVING SPIKES DURING THE HOLIDAY PERIOD, MAKING OUR ROADS AND HIGHWAYS MORE DANGEROUS

**The National Road Safety Foundation Urges Motorists to Plan Ahead
When Driving During Holidays; Alcohol, Drugs and Fatigue Are Major Risks**

NEW YORK, Nov. 18, 2021 -- The year-end holiday period, from Thanksgiving through New Year's, is one of the most dangerous times on U.S. roads and highways, with a spike in crashes that often result in serious injuries or death. The National Road Safety Foundation, a non-profit group that for 60 years has been promoting safe driving through education, says the increased risk comes from a combination of factors that include impairment from alcohol and drugs coupled with a higher incidence of drowsy driving.

In 2019, of 10,142 alcohol-impaired traffic fatalities, 837 occurred during the month of December, according to statistics from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). Christmas and New Year's were especially dangerous, with more drunk-driving fatalities than during any other holiday period that year.

The financial impact of impaired driving crashes is enormous – more than \$44 billion every year, according to NHTSA. If you're caught drinking and driving, you can lose your license and even face jail time. A DUI can cost more than \$10,000 in fines, attorney fees and higher insurance rates. On top of the financial cost, there's the emotional impact of needlessly causing a death or serious injury to others.

Drugs, both legal or illegal, are another big factor in fatal crashes. Even in states where marijuana is legal, it is against the law to drive while impaired. Some prescription drugs can also cause impairment or drowsiness, so it is important to check labels and be aware of possible effects before driving.

“A bit of knowledge and some planning can help prevent a tragedy from marring the holidays,” said Michelle Anderson, director of operations at The National Road Safety Foundation. “The holidays are a time we drive to family gatherings and parties, with lots of food and drink. If you will be driving, it’s important to avoid drinking, have a designated driver or an alternate way to get home. And we often feel drowsy after a big meal, so drivers need to recognize the signs of drowsiness and know steps to take if they feel drowsy behind the wheel.”

The National Road Safety Foundation urges drivers to be alert to these signs of drowsiness while driving:

- Difficulty focusing, frequent blinking, rubbing eyes
- Daydreaming or not remembering the last few miles driven
- Head snaps, nodding and yawning
- Drifting out of your lane, tailgating or hitting rumble strips

If you experience any of these warning signs, pull over safely and take a break. Have a cup of coffee or a caffeinated snack or take a 20-minute nap. Allow 30 minutes for caffeine to enter your bloodstream. Some common “remedies” like blasting the radio or opening the car windows are not effective at preventing drowsiness while driving.

NRSF has free resources on impaired and drowsy driving, including “Almost Home,” a compelling 18-minute video, a drowsiness self-assessment quiz and a personal sleep log. They can be downloaded at www.nrsf.org/resources

The National Road Safety Foundation, Inc., a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization founded 60 years ago, produces free videos and teaching materials on distracted driving, speed and aggression, impaired driving, drowsy driving, driver proficiency, pedestrian safety and a host of other safety issues. It also sponsors contests to engage teens in promoting safe driving to their peers and in their communities, partnering nationally with youth advocacy groups including SADD and FCCLA and regionally with auto shows in Los Angeles, Chicago and Washington D.C.

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