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FREE ST. PATRICK'S DAY CAB RIDES OFFERED IN GREATER WASHINGTON TONIGHT TO CURB DRUNK DRIVING

NEARLY 40% OF ALL U.S. TRAFFIC DEATHS ON ST. PATTY'S DAY ARE ALCOHOL-RELATED

Washington, D.C., Mar. 17 – Preparing to combat that time of year when nearly 40-percent of all traffic deaths are alcohol-related*, area officials announced today that free cab rides will be offered to would-be drunk drivers throughout the Washington-metropolitan area beginning at 4:00 pm today (St. Patrick's Day).

Offered by the nonprofit Washington Regional Alcohol Program (WRAP), the St. Patty's Day *SoberRide* program will be in operation beginning at 4:00 pm on Tuesday, March 17th and continue until 4:00 am the following day as a way to keep local roads safe from impaired drivers during this traditionally high-risk holiday.

During this 12-hour period, area residents celebrating with alcohol may call the toll-free *SoberRide* phone number **1 – 800 – 200 – TAXI (8294)** and be afforded a no-cost (up to a \$ 50 fare), safe way home.

AT&T wireless customers can dial **# - TAXI (8294)** for the same service. Local taxicab companies throughout the Washington-metropolitan area provide this no-cost service to local residents age 21 and older who otherwise may have attempted to drive home after drinking.

“People might be surprised to know that more Americans are killed by drunk drivers during St. Patrick's Day than on New Year's Eve,” said Kurt Gregory Erickson, WRAP's President.

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SoberRide is offered in the District of Columbia; throughout the Maryland counties of Montgomery and Prince George's; and throughout the Northern Virginia counties of Arlington, Fairfax, (eastern) Loudoun and Prince William.

Last St. Patrick's Day (2008), 218 persons used WRAP's *SoberRide* service rather than possibly driving home impaired.

Sponsors of this year's St. Patrick's Day *SoberRide* offering include Anheuser-Busch, AT&T, Baileys & Bushmills, Enterprise Rent-A-Car Foundation, Red Top Cab and the Washington Area New Automobile Dealers Association.

In addition, eight of the Washington-metropolitan area's better-known Irish restaurants have also united to ensure a safe St. Patrick's Day celebration this year by sponsoring *SoberRide*. These dining establishments include: **Daniel O'Connell's Restaurant** (VA); **The Dubliner Restaurant & Pub** (DC); **Fado** (DC); **Irish Channel Restaurant** (DC); **Irish Inn at Glen Echo** (MD); **Kelly's Irish Times** (DC); **Martin's Tavern est. 1933** (DC); and **Murphy's Grand Irish Pubs** (DC & VA).

Participating taxicab companies include: Alexandria Yellow Cab; Barwood; Fairfax Yellow Cab; Loudoun Yellow Cab; Manassas Cab Company; Red Top Cab; Silver Cab of Prince George's County; Yellow Cab of D.C.; and Yellow Cab of Prince William County.

Founded in 1982, the Washington Regional Alcohol Program is an award-winning public-private partnership working to prevent drunk driving and underage drinking in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan region. Through public education, innovative health education programs and advocacy, WRAP is credited with keeping the metro-Washington area's alcohol-related traffic deaths consistently lower than the national average.

Since 1993, WRAP's *SoberRide* program has provided 43,386 free cab rides home to would-be drunk drivers in the Greater Washington area.

For more information, visit **www.soberride.com**.

(* 38.4% -- source: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 2004-2008 U.S. highway data, see: <http://www.stopimpaireddriving.org/planners/StPatrick2009/tp.doc>.)

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