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Governor McDonnell Launches Statewide Crackdown to Reduce Alcohol-Related Incidents

RICHMOND – Governor Bob McDonnell today led law enforcement officers from across the Commonwealth in kicking off the 2010 *Checkpoint Strikeforce* campaign at the Virginia State Police Academy. During the event he called attention to significant progress achieved over the past decade but noted that additional work must be done – particularly with regard to protecting the very individuals who keep Virginia highways safe. Just since July 1st, three Virginia State Police troopers have been struck by drunk drivers.

In 2009, fewer individuals (316) were killed on Virginia highways due to alcohol than in any year since 1997. Last year also saw fewer injuries (6,256) on Virginia roads than in any year since at least 1984. The Governor and public safety officials credited this progress to the combination of effective public education and targeted enforcement.

“I got my start in public service in the Commonwealth as a prosecutor and was honored to serve as Attorney General. Public safety is a top priority for me and law enforcement across Virginia, and this includes cracking down on drunk driving,” said Governor McDonnell. “We’ve made enormous progress in protecting Virginians from the dangers of drunk driving. However, we still have much work to do. Virginia’s law enforcement and motorists still must continue to work together towards making our roads even safer.”

As part of the Checkpoint Strikeforce program, Virginia’s law enforcement community is out in force, looking for drunk drivers. In 2009, 36,718 individuals were arrested for DUI across the state, resulting in 31,434 DUI convictions – an average of one conviction every 17 minutes.

To assist with the 2010 *Checkpoint Strikeforce* kickoff, Virginia law enforcement agencies are joining with neighboring states Kentucky, Maryland, North Carolina, Tennessee and West Virginia in a border-to-border effort over the Labor Day holiday. A total of 14 traffic fatalities occurred statewide during the four-day holiday last year, nearly twice the amount from the previous year.

The region-wide *Checkpoint Strikeforce* campaign combines stepped-up law enforcement efforts and proactive public education to promote a multijurisdictional effort in the fight against drunk driving. A significant multi-media campaign, encompassing radio and television, will run nearly 34,500 ads on a total of 96 broadcast stations, cable systems and radio stations in Virginia between August and December. Additionally, targeted internet advertising is expected to garner approximately five-million impressions over the course of the campaign.

In addition to the *Checkpoint Strikeforce* campaign, the Virginia State Police will engage in the annual *Operation C.A.R.E.* traffic enforcement campaign. The *Operation Combined Accident Reduction Effort* (C.A.R.E.) is a state-sponsored, national program designed to reduce crashes, fatalities and injuries caused by speeding, impaired driving and failure to use occupant restraints. As a participating agency, Virginia State Police will increase visibility and traffic enforcement efforts throughout the Commonwealth beginning Friday morning, September 3, 2010, at 12:01 a.m. and continuing through midnight Monday, September 6, 2010.

MWR Strategies, a Richmond-based research firm that has conducted *Checkpoint Strikeforce* campaign surveys since 2002, conducted a public opinion survey of 800 drivers in Virginia, Maryland and the District of Columbia in June 2010 for *Checkpoint Strikeforce*. Among the campaign’s targeted audience of males aged 21 to 35, key findings include:

- The biggest fear amongst this group of local male drivers as a result of driving while intoxicated is killing or injuring someone else (64%), more than arrest (13%) or their own death (16%).
- Nearly three-quarters (73%) of these local drivers perceive drunk driving as one of the most serious dangers faced on area roadways.
- The same number of people (73%) in this group think that being caught by police should be drunk drivers’ number one fear.
- Nearly one-out-of-four (24%) of these local drivers said that they would (or have) changed their behavior knowing that sobriety checkpoints were being held in their area.

The *Checkpoint Strikeforce* campaign is supported by a grant from the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles’ Highway Safety Office to the nonprofit and Virginia-based Washington Regional Alcohol Program (WRAP).

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Get more information at <http://www.checkpointstrikeforce.net/educate.html>, and view the ads at <http://www.checkpointstrikeforce.net/vadui.html>.