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DRUNK DRIVING DEATHS REMAIN LEVEL WHILE DUI INJURIES, CRASHES & ARRESTS INCREASE IN GREATER WASHINGTON

NEW REPORT CITES INCREASES IN DRUNK DRIVING INCIDENTS IN WASHINGTON-METRO AREA

Washington, DC, Dec. 17 -- While the number of alcohol-related traffic fatalities remained unchanged in the Washington-metropolitan area in 2009, drunk driving injuries, crashes and arrests are each on the rise in Greater Washington according to a preliminary report released today by the nonprofit Washington Regional Alcohol Program (WRAP).

“The report’s findings virtually erase the previous two consecutive years’ decline in drunk driving injuries, crashes and arrests,” said Kurt Gregory Erickson, WRAP’s President.

Today’s data will be contained in WRAP’s 18th-annual report, “How Safe are Our Roads?, A Data Report on the Impact of Drunk Driving on Highway Safety in the Washington Metropolitan Region” scheduled for full release later this month. The report was prepared by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) for the McLean, Virginia-based alcohol-education group.

Findings in the 2010 report include:

- **FATALITIES...**Local alcohol and or drug-related traffic deaths remained *unchanged* between 2008 and 2009 (92 such fatalities each year.) Such negates a previous, two-year consecutive decline in such deaths occurring in the Greater Washington area.
- **CRASHES...**Area traffic crashes attributed to alcohol and or drugs *increased* by more than 24-percent (24.7%) between 2008 and 2009 (and from 3,946 to 4,921 such crashes). Such negates a previous, two-year consecutive decline in such crashes deaths occurring in the Greater Washington area.
- **INJURIES...**Local alcohol and or drug-related traffic injuries also *increased* by over 20-percent (20.9%) between 2008 and 2009 (and from 2,352 to 2,843 such injuries). Such negates a previous, two-year consecutive decline in such crashes deaths occurring in the Greater Washington area.

- **ARRESTS...**Local arrests for either driving under the influence (DUI) or driving while intoxicated (DWI) **increased** by nearly two-percent (1.7%) between 2008 and 2009 (and from 15,729 to 15,996 such arrests). Such represents the third consecutive year increase in such arrests being made in the Greater Washington area and the highest level of impaired driving arrests occurring in the Greater Washington area in seven years (2002:16,309 DUI/DWI arrests).

Of the Washington metropolitan area's 265 total traffic fatalities last year, over one-third (34.7%) of these roadway deaths were alcohol and or drug-related (BAC = .01+). 2009 national statistics (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration) show that 38-percent of total U.S. vehicular fatalities in 2009 were reported as alcohol / drug related (BAC = .01+).

“As all drunk driving incidents are one-hundred-percent preventable, these latest trends are reversible,” said Erickson. ***“However, to do so, we must resist complacency in combating one of the region’s most frequently committed violent crimes, drunk driving.”***

WRAP's timing in releasing its preliminary report is in tandem with this country's most deadly time of year when it comes to drunk driving. According to NHTSA, historically, more people are killed in alcohol-related traffic crashes between Thanksgiving and New Year's than during any other period of the year.

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-metropolitan area. 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. WRAP, however, may best be known to area residents via the organization's popular free cab ride service for would-be drunk drivers, *SoberRide*. For more information, visit WRAP's web site at **www.wrap.org**.

**WRAP's 2010 “How Safe are Our Roads?” report
can be found later this month as a pdf file at:**

<http://www.wrap.org/highwaysafety10.pdf>

*(WRAP's holiday free cab ride service for would-be drunk drivers, SoberRide, operates between 10:00 pm and 6:00 am each day during the period of December 17, 2010 through January 1, 2011. During these evening hours, Washington-metropolitan area residents ages 21 and older celebrating with alcohol may call the toll-free SoberRide phone number 1-800-200-TAXI and be afforded a no-cost [up to a \$ 30 fare], safe way home. AT&T wireless customers can call #-TAXI for the same service. See **www.soberride.com** for more details.)*