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GREATER WASHINGTON SOBERRIDE **PROGRAM GEARS-UP FOR NEW YEAR'S EVE**

U.S. DRUNK DRIVING DEATHS NEARLY DOUBLE ON NEW YEAR'S EVE

Washington, DC, Dec. 27 – Combating a holiday period when nearly twice as many U.S. traffic deaths are caused by drunk drivers than during Christmas or any other December evening* (source: NHTSA [see link below]), area officials announced the launch of an anti-drunk driving initiative designed to reduce alcohol-related traffic incidents in Greater Washington this New Year's Eve.

Specifically, a coalition of local law enforcement officials, business professionals and area citizens announced that free cab rides will be offered throughout Greater Washington's area this New Year's Eve.

Offered by the nonprofit Washington Regional Alcohol Program (WRAP), the annual *SoberRide* program, already in operation, will be in full swing beginning at 10:00 pm this Saturday, December 31, 2011 (New Year's Eve) and operate until 6:00 am on Sunday, January 1, 2012 as a way to keep local roads safe from impaired drivers during this traditionally high-risk, holiday period.

During these eight hours beginning on New year's Eve and concluding on New year's Day, Washington-metropolitan area residents celebrating with alcohol may call the toll-free *SoberRide* phone number **1-800-200-TAXI** and be afforded a no-cost (up to \$ 30 fare), safe way home. (AT&T wireless users can dial **#TAXI** for the same service.)

"Last New Year's Eve, nearly 1,000 (967) Greater Washington residents did the right thing and availed themselves of this lifesaving service rather than possibly driving home impaired," said Kurt Gregory Erickson, WRAP's President. ***"For SoberRide's hours of operation during just last New Year's Eve, such ridership translated into the removal of a would-be drunk driver from our shared roadways every 30-seconds."***

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. In these areas, local taxicab companies will be providing this no-cost service to local residents age 21 and older who otherwise may have attempted to drive home after drinking.

Since 1993, WRAP's *SoberRide* program has provided 52,841 free cab rides home to would-be drunk drivers in the Greater Washington area.

Sponsors of the 2011 Holiday *SoberRide* campaign include: Anheuser-Busch, AT&T, Diageo, GEICO, MillersCoors/Premium Distributors of Washington, D.C., Red Top Cab, Restaurant Association Metropolitan Washington, Volkswagen Group of America and the Washington Area New Automobile Dealers Association.

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 nonprofit [501(c)(3)] 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.

More information about WRAP's *SoberRide* initiative can be found at **www.soberride.com**.

* Source: NHTSA, see:
<http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/Pubs/810870.PDF>

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