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# Celebrate Safely or Suffer the Consequences

## *Police Across Central Virginia Aim to Rid Roads of Drunk Drivers this Holiday Season*

**Richmond, VA** – Richmond City Police made their presence known in Shockoe Bottom Friday evening, targeting and apprehending impaired drivers as part of Virginia’s 2013 *Checkpoint Strikeforce* campaign. This “happy hour” sobriety checkpoint, along with a checkpoint conducted by Hanover County Police later that same night, is part of a coordinated effort throughout Central Virginia to ensure no one’s holiday season is wrecked by a drunk driver’s bad decision. Between now and January 1, a total of 24 sobriety checkpoints and 79 saturation patrols are scheduled to take place in the Richmond metropolitan area – an average of more than five activities per day.

“No matter where your celebrations take you this season, there is never an excuse to take the party on the road,” stated Kurt Erickson, President of the Virginia-based Washington Regional Alcohol Program (WRAP). “Anyone in Central Virginia with even the slightest notion of getting behind the wheel after consuming alcohol, know this: if you drink and drive, you have no place to hide,” added Lieutenant William Kelly, Richmond City Police Department. “You will be caught, you will be arrested and you will be prosecuted.”

2012 marked the fifth-consecutive year of declining drunk driving deaths in Virginia, which are down over 35% since 2008 (35.31%, 354 > 229). However despite the progress achieved, the December holidays remain a notoriously dangerous time for drunk driving incidents in the Richmond region (Chesterfield Co.; Goochland Co.; Hanover Co.; Henrico Co.; Powhatan Co.; Hopewell, VA; Petersburg, VA; and Richmond, VA). Over Christmas (December 22-25) in 2012, alcohol-related crashes increased 56% from the previous year (9 to 14). Alcohol-related injuries increased 25% during the same time period that year (4 to 5).

In conjunction with the holiday season, WRAP and central Virginia law enforcement offer the following “safe celebrating” tips to prevent drunk driving:

- Plan ahead and designate a driver if you’re celebrating with alcohol.
- Use alternative transportation like taxi cabs or public transit.
- Be a responsible host by:
  - Not serving anyone who appears to be impaired.

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- Serving food with alcohol (high protein foods like meats and cheeses stay in the stomach longer thereby slowing the body's alcohol absorption rate).
- Using a non-carbonated base in alcoholic punches (the body absorbs alcohol faster when mixed with carbonization).
- Serving non-alcoholic beverages as an option.
- NEVER serving minors.
- Closing the bar at least an hour before the event's end.
- Designating a bartender / don't let guests mix their own drinks.
- NEVER allowing impaired guests to get behind the wheel.
- Wear your seatbelt.
- Report drunk drivers.

Started in 2002, Virginia's *Checkpoint Strikeforce* campaign is part of a research-based multi-state, zero-tolerance initiative designed to get impaired drivers off the roads using checkpoints and patrols along with education about the dangers and consequences of driving while intoxicated. While the campaign aims to reach all potential drunk drivers, they specifically focus their attention on males aged 21 to 35, a demographic representing nearly a third (31%) of all persons killed in Virginia's alcohol-related traffic crashes last year.

In addition to a significant multimedia campaign featuring more than 40,000 campaign ads running on nearly 90 television, cable and radio stations in Virginia, *Checkpoint Strikeforce* incorporates a stepped-up law enforcement effort to promote a multijurisdictional fight against drunk driving. State and local police increase visibility through sobriety checkpoints and saturation patrols. Last year, 28,719 people were convicted of DUI in Virginia, a nearly two-percent (1.98%) increase from 2011.

*For more information on Checkpoint Strikeforce, please visit: [www.checkpointstrikeforce.net](http://www.checkpointstrikeforce.net).*

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

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