



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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MARYLAND LAW ENFORCEMENT SERVES **REMINDER TO “MAKE IT TO THE TABLE”**

More than one-third of deaths over thanksgiving involve drunk drivers

Nov. 22, 2017 – As millions of Americans get on the roads to travel home and spend the Thanksgiving holiday reconnecting with friends and loved ones, state transportation officials and law enforcement agencies across Maryland are serving a timely reminder: “Make It to the Table: Don’t Drink and Drive.”

According to National Highway Traffic Safety Administration data, more than one-third (35%) of U.S. traffic deaths over the Thanksgiving holiday period involve drunk drivers with the night before Thanksgiving being especially deadly. The Wednesday night before Thanksgiving has become a cultural phenomenon often called ‘Thanksgiving Eve’ or ‘Blackout Wednesday.’ It’s become an evening associated with drinking and it’s a big night for bars as people reunite with friends and family.

“Celebrating is a big part of Thanksgiving,” said Kurt Erickson, President of the Washington Regional Alcohol Program (WRAP). “We just want to remind everyone across Maryland to make a plan to always have a safe and sober ride.”

WRAP is a grantee of the Maryland Department of Transportation Motor Vehicle Administration’s Highway Safety Office (MHSO) and manages Maryland’s *Checkpoint Strikeforce* media campaign. As part of *Checkpoint Strikeforce*, local, county, and state law enforcement agencies throughout Maryland continue to increase enforcement efforts to identify and apprehend alcohol-impaired drivers on the State’s roadways.

Each year, more than 20,000 people are arrested for DUI offenses in Maryland. Penalties for even a first-time DUI conviction in Maryland include jail time, significant fines, mandatory ignition interlock, and license suspension.

“Every death from drunk driving can be completely prevented,” said Erickson. “Each one of us has a role to play in saving lives on our roads. Use options like rideshares, cabs, public transportation, and designated drivers. Simply put – don’t drink and drive.”

As travel volume increases, transportation officials are also urging motorists and passengers to wear seat belts on every trip. The routine wearing of seatbelts is the single most effective measure to reduce crash-related deaths and injuries and is our best defense against a drunk driver.

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