



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
August 29, 2007

Contact: Mary Ellen Menton  
202-289-2001  
Greg Shipley, MSP  
410-653-4236

## **MARYLAND STATEWIDE LAW ENFORCEMENT PUTS THE CUFFS ON DRUNK DRIVERS**

### *2006 Spike in Local Alcohol-Related Traffic Fatalities Signals Warning*

ANNAPOLIS – As Marylanders prepare to hit the highway for the long Labor Day weekend – historically the third deadliest holiday involving impaired driving crashes – state and local law enforcement officials launched *Checkpoint Strikeforce*, a half-year, high visibility statewide education and enforcement campaign to stop drunk drivers. A key focus of the 2007 campaign is to raise public awareness of the many dangers and consequences of impaired driving including getting arrested or killing someone. Colonel Terrence Sheridan, Secretary of the Maryland State Police, kicked off the more than half million-dollar campaign from outside the Howard County Detention Center, the destination of many arrested drunk drivers.

“There is no excuse for driving under the influence,” said Colonel Terrence Sheridan, Superintendent of the Maryland State Police. “DUI enforcement is a top priority in Maryland. We know the danger posed by drunk drivers and we will continue to do all we can to identify and apprehend them.”

State and local data was analyzed at the launch event and indicated a 17-percent increase in alcohol-related traffic fatalities in Maryland in 2006. The year prior, however, alcohol-related traffic fatalities in Maryland decreased a total of 18-percent between 2004 and 2005 – the second largest decrease in drunk driving deaths in the nation that year.

In 2006, Maryland law enforcement made more than 25,000 arrests for driving under the influence (DUI) – equivalent to an arrest every 21 minutes – and confiscated more than 15,400 licenses, according to the Maryland Automated Accident Reporting System (MAARS). Last year, more people were arrested in Maryland for drunk driving than the number of people who reside in Bel Air, Chevy Chase, Crisfield and La Plata combined. For the remainder of the year, Maryland State Police and more than 70 local law enforcement agencies will hold a minimum of one sobriety checkpoint or saturation patrol per week across the state.

Studies conducted by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety show that sobriety checkpoints can reduce alcohol-related crashes by as much as 20-percent. Deploying sobriety checkpoints and saturation patrols when and where drunk driving is most likely to occur both deters motorists from driving under the influence and arrests those who do so.

**-MORE-**

In addition to law enforcement efforts, *Checkpoint Strikeforce* employs radio and television ads in combination with other outreach initiatives to remind Marylanders of the many dangers and consequences of impaired driving. Males between the ages of 21 and 35 are the primary target audience. This demographic group is typically harder to reach with public awareness campaigns and statistically represents the highest risk for driving under the influence. Throughout the next four and a half months more than 11,500 ads will run in Maryland and the Washington-metro area.

Maryland drivers are seeing the difference and supporting sobriety checkpoints. A July 2007 public opinion survey of Maryland area drivers conducted for *Checkpoint Strikeforce* by MWR Strategies, found that 89-percent of Maryland drivers support the anti-DUI initiative. In fact, 73-percent of drivers are aware of sobriety checkpoints in their area while more than two-thirds of Maryland drivers (70-percent) perceive drunk drivers as among the most serious dangers they face on the road.

“Our message to drunk and impaired drivers is this: if you drink or use drugs and drive, you’ll lose,” commented Chief William McMahan, Howard County Police. “If you don’t get the message through education, police will make sure you get it through enforcement. Working together, we will make Maryland roads safer.”

*Checkpoint Strikeforce* is supported by a grant from the Maryland Department of Transportation’s State Highway Administration’s Highway Safety Office. The campaign utilizes a two-pronged approach of public education and law enforcement. The statewide efforts of *Checkpoint Strikeforce* coincide with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration’s national “Drunk driving. Over the Limit. Under Arrest.” crackdown, which was announced on August 20.

Listen to the ads and get more information at <http://www.checkpointstrikeforce.net/educate.html>

###