



**\*\*\*For Immediate Release\*\*\***

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## **Western States Traffic Safety Coalition** **Initiates Special New Year's Eve Safety Effort**

Olympia, Washington - The Western States Traffic Safety Coalition (WSTSC) wants everyone to know that dangerous driving has no place on our roadways during the New Year's holiday and that drunk or high drivers have nowhere to hide from the thousands of troopers and officers that will be on the roads in the eleven-state association.

The 'Coalition' includes the Arizona Department of Public Safety, California Highway Patrol, Colorado State Patrol, Idaho State Police, Montana Highway Patrol, Nevada Highway Patrol, Oregon State Police, South Dakota Highway Patrol, Utah Highway Patrol, Washington State Patrol, and the Wyoming Highway Patrol. These law enforcement agencies are committed and unified to keeping the people of their communities' safe during this Holiday. When it comes to drunk or high driving, there is no state line or safe harbor. Violators will receive the full attention of law enforcement wherever they go.

WSTSC began a social media campaign emphasizing the dangers of driving drunk or high prior to the Thanksgiving holiday that has continued throughout the Christmas, and now New Year's, celebrations. Even during the current pandemic, state law enforcement agencies worry that some may feel New Year's Eve is the ultimate party night and engage in risky driving behavior. The general public recognizes the danger; feedback continually underscores the public's expectation that law enforcement should strictly enforce the laws that protect our love ones on the roadways.

Impaired driving has a devastating impact on the quality of life for those in all communities. On average, 300 people die each year in the US during the days associated with New Year's celebrations. Since 2007, WSP has responded to an average of 469 collisions during New Year's celebrations each year. On average, 14 percent of those have resulted in injury. WSP makes an average of 217 DUI arrests each New Year's holiday and on average two people die on our state highways and two more are seriously injured during New Year's celebrations.

Last year, drunk and high driving caused one third of all national road fatalities in in the US accounting for over 10,000 entirely preventable traffic fatalities.

Driving impaired by any substance - alcohol or drugs, whether legal or illegal - is against the law in all states. All law enforcement officers are trained to observe drivers' behavior and to identify impaired drivers. Specially trained DREs (Drug Recognition Experts) identify those drivers impaired by drugs other than, or in addition

to, alcohol. Washington residents should remember that even in states where marijuana laws have changed, it is still illegal to drive under the influence of the drug.

As WSP Chief John Batiste recently stated, *“We all agree that 2020 has been a tough year and we are all hopeful that 2021 will be a new year worthy of celebration. BUT we can’t start that New Year with bad decisions on the roadways. The Washington State Patrol and the WSTSC encourages everyone to plan ahead, celebrate responsibly, and to never drive drunk or high.”* He added, *“Our goal is zero deaths due to impaired driving on the New Year’s holiday and when it comes to drunk or high driving, in this and every state in our part of the country, there is simply no place to hide.”*

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