

It's Hard to Have Happy Holidays When You're Arrested for Drunk Driving

This holiday season law enforcement will be out in force and cracking down on drunk drivers throughout the region with aggressive *Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over* enforcement. The sad reality is that Texas continues to lead the nation in drunken driving fatalities, and the holiday period is especially dangerous.

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service reminds drivers that the *Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over* campaign runs from now until January 1, 2014.

The death toll from drunk driving significantly increases during the period from Christmas to New Year's Day. According to the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), Texas DWI fatalities during the holiday season December 1-31, 2012, resulted in 96 fatalities. But not everyone dies in a crash. Many live with lifelong, debilitating injuries as a result of their own drunk driving or that of a complete stranger.

The consequences and costs are significant if you are caught driving while intoxicated, costing you \$17,000 or more, the loss of your driver license, higher insurance rates, and dozens of other unanticipated expenses.

Even a little holiday cheer can impair a person's driving. Plan ahead if you are going to drink alcohol. The message is out there, but it only works if you join our efforts this holiday season by pledging to give or be the gift of a sober driver. Find out how to pledge at soberrides.org. Other tips include:

- Designate a non-drinking driver *before* festivities begin.
- Keep taxi cab phone numbers handy if your city has cab service, and dial one when you're ready to leave.
- Make arrangements to call someone you trust to pick you up.
- Spend the night where you are.
- Step up and step in – don't let friends drive if they've been drinking. Give someone a gift by being their sober, designated driver.

For information on free alcohol awareness programs available through the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service *Watch UR BAC* program in College Station, go to www.watchurbac.tamu.edu or call 979-862-1911.