

DUI Checkpoints, Saturation Patrols Kicking into High Gear

Posted by [TBN](#) On 12/21/2010

The St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office is kicking off their Holiday campaign against drunken driving this month with a multipronged effort aimed at keeping impaired drivers off the road. With schools letting out and a few weeks before Christmas and New Years, the holiday season is kicking into high gear and, with it, the likelihood that folks will be out imbibing alcohol-laced refreshments. Deputy Sheriff's will be conducting Saturation Patrols and DUI Checkpoints day and night through the holiday season to prevent impaired operators from driving on St. Mary's County roadways. Deputies will use zero tolerance while conducting these patrols. If you are over the limit then you will be placed under arrest.

Beginning this week, St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office will partner with CheckPoint StrikeForce and St. Mary's County Highway Safety Program to conduct sobriety checkpoints at undisclosed locations throughout St. Mary's County. These Checkpoints are an effort to crack down on impaired drivers and those driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol. These enhanced enforcement efforts are part of Maryland's Toward Zero Deaths goal, which focuses on eradicating fatalities caused by impaired drivers and other preventable traffic risks such as aggressive driving, speeding and lack of seat belt use.

The sobriety checkpoints will be clearly marked with signs, lights and uniformed officers. Officers' primary objective will be to check for violations including driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs. They will also use this opportunity to heighten awareness about the dangers associated with drunk driving and send a clear message that checkpoints are but one tool in the arsenal used to combat drunk driving.

Maryland has a zero tolerance law which means that individuals under the age of 21 are subject to arrest and license suspension or revocation for any amount of alcohol in their blood. For those of legal drinking age, Maryland's alcohol limit is .08, which can be caused by consuming as little as one drink over a one-hour period. In addition, Maryland is tougher than most states in that, breath alcohol content (BAC) of .07 can also lead to a driving while under the influence of alcohol arrest. Beware of the false sense of security, Maryland law enforcement officers have the tools needed to keep impaired drivers off the road and responsible motorists safe.

Last year in Maryland, alcohol or drugs were a factor in 29 percent of fatal collisions and 24,000 people were arrested for driving while impaired by alcohol or drugs. By promoting awareness about the dangers of impaired driving St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office hopes to reduce the number of drivers under the influence and related collisions, injuries and fatalities.

The St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office would also like to remind motorists to have designated drivers. If you are out consuming alcoholic beverages and feel as if you had too much to drink ask your bartender if they participate in the "Tipsy Taxi Program" which will provide you with a safe and free ride home. If that isn't available to you call a taxi, call a friend, or get a hotel room for the evening. And remember, simply choosing a designated driver can save a large sum of money. The cost of a D.U.I is far more expensive than spending a small amount of money to ensure a

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