

The Virgin Islands Consortium

VIPD Joins Mainland In Cracking Down On Drunk Driving During Holidays

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ST. CROIX -- If you're enjoying the holidays with a drink, the Virgin Islands Police Department's Office of Highway Safety has a message for you: drive sober or get pulled over.

Due to the increase in drunk-driving related fatalities around the holidays each year, law enforcement agencies across America will be actively searching for and arresting drunk drivers from December 16 to January 1. And they have good reason to: in 2013, 10,076 people were killed in crashes involving a drunk driver. In December 2013 alone there were 733 people killed in crashes involving at least one driver or motorcycle operator with a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of .08 or higher. 23 of those deaths occurred on

Christmas Day.

"It's time for all drivers to get the message, drunk driving is a choice you make, and when you make that choice, people get hurt or die," Traffic Commander Lt. Joseph Platt said. "That's why we're joining with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to share the message: Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over."

The safest way to get home, Lt. Joseph Platt said, is to drive sober or catch a ride with a sober designated driver. If you plan on drinking at a holiday party or at a restaurant, hand the keys over to someone else – a sober friend, a taxi or public transportation.

As part of the national Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over enforcement campaign period, police will be increasing the number of patrols, setting up roadblocks, and using local media to reach out to all drivers. If you're drinking and driving, VIPD will stop you, the release warns. If you're caught drinking and driving you could face jail time, fines, loss of driver's license, towing fees, and other DUI expenses, totaling \$10,000 on average. And those charges doesn't account for the pricier charge of life or someone else's. Locally, between 2010- 2014 there were 898 impaired driving arrests made, 488 DUI related crashes, including 7 fatalities.

In addition to reminding all motorists to drive sober, the VIPD's Office of Highway Safety is calling on everyone to be alert. If you see a drunk driver on the road, call the police right away, the release urges. If someone you know is about to drive after drinking, take their keys and help them get home safely, it adds.

"We've got to work together to make our roads safer this December and year-round," Lt. Joseph Platt concluded.

Drivers are also asked to follow these tips: