



Warren C. Evans
Sheriff

News Release

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Release Date: November 21, 2007
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Sheriff, local PDs kick off 2007 Holiday patrols by targeting Pre-Thanksgiving "binge drinkers"

◆ *Countywide funding for OWI & seatbelt enforcement doubled over last year*

The Wayne County Sheriff's Office, along with 17 suburban police agencies, recently were awarded a major increase in state funding for drunken driving and seatbelt enforcement and will kick off their increased patrols starting at 5PM Wednesday, November 21, to target drunken drivers, Sheriff Warren Evans announced today.

"The Thanksgiving holiday historically has been one of the deadliest periods on Michigan roadways," Evans said. "This is due in part to the fact that the night before Thanksgiving has become one of the busiest of the year at local bars," Evans said.

In 2006, during the 4-day Thanksgiving holiday period in Wayne County there were 35 alcohol-involved crashes, 13 of which resulted in injuries, and three fatalities. Wayne County task force officers arrested 19 suspected drunken drivers during last year's enforcement period. Statewide during the same timeframe, 23 motorists were killed in 14 alcohol related crashes.

An additional concern, Evans said, is the growing phenomenon of "**binge drinking**" among college students who are heading home for the Holidays. According to the Centers for Disease Control, binge drinkers are most likely to be underage (18-20) and are 14 times more likely than others to drive while intoxicated.

"This is something we have been hearing more about in recent years as we head into the Thanksgiving weekend. Since many of those kids are coming back home to Wayne County, our task force will hit the streets early to help make sure everyone gets home safely."

More money for safe roads

For the 2008 fiscal year, which began October 1, Evans said the county's police agencies will receive \$755,000 from the Michigan Office of Highway Safety Planning for targeted enforcement periods throughout the year, more than doubling Wayne County's previous budget of \$325,000. The \$430,000 increase over last year gives county police agencies their largest fund ever to conduct seatbelt and drunken driving enforcement.

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Of the 17 agencies in the task force, 12 will be participating in the Thanksgiving enforcement period, assigning a total of 40 additional patrol officers to this important effort:

- Brownstown
- Dearborn
- Dearborn Heights
- Grosse Ile
- Northville Twp.
- Riverview
- Romulus
- Taylor
- Trenton
- Wayne Co. Sheriff
- Westland
- Wyandotte

Ne'chole McClendon, Programming Coordinator for Mothers Against Drunk Driving said she is glad to see that there will be an even higher concentration of officers on the road this year looking for problem drivers because it supports MADD's Campaign to Eliminate Drunken Driving.

"Nearly one million of the 1.4 million drunken driving arrests annually involve first-time offenders," McClendon said. "If, through additional patrols like these, law enforcement agencies are able to intercept more drunken drivers early in their 'career,' those individuals stand a better chance at reforming their behavior."

SHERIFF NOTE: The following agencies will be sending marked patrol cars to the press event:

- Canton
- Dearborn
- Northville Twp
- Riverview
- Taylor
- Trenton
- Westland (Mayor Wild to attend).

Speaking Order will be:

- Sheriff Evans
- County Executive Ficano
- Mayor William Wild
- Ne'chole McClendon (MADD Wayne County Program Coordinator)