



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
September 3, 2009

Contact: Emily Howard/Jessica Larkin  
202-289-2001  
Kurt Erickson  
703-625-2303

## **MARYLAND DRUNK DRIVERS HEAD STRAIGHT BEHIND BARS**

### ***Checkpoint Strikeforce Campaign Launches in Maryland***

**Baltimore, Md.** – In the heart of Baltimore, Maryland, law enforcement officers joined local leaders to kick off the 2009 *Checkpoint Strikeforce* campaign. As Maryland drivers prepare to hit the roads for the upcoming Labor Day weekend, the statewide anti-drunk driving initiative is back in action with stepped up enforcement and sobriety checkpoints.

“Getting behind the wheel after drinking is a bad decision every time,” stated Major Roger Bergeron, Baltimore Police Department. “To those who delude themselves into thinking they won’t get caught, let me warn you: All of Maryland’s law enforcement community is mobilized to ensure you will. Anyone doubting my warning should ask the more than 24,000 Maryland drivers who were arrested for driving under the influence in 2008.”

Statistics point to progress made by the enforcement crackdown and public education comprising the *Checkpoint Strikeforce* campaign. Maryland data shows a 15 percent decrease in alcohol-related fatalities from 2007 to 2008. However, according to additional Maryland data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the 152 alcohol-related fatalities still accounted for more than one fourth (26 percent) of Maryland’s traffic fatalities in 2008. While this figure is lower than the national average of 32 percent, indicating a positive trend in behavior for the state, the need for the campaign’s stringent and tireless efforts will remain until every drunk driver has been removed from the road.

“Catching drunk drivers is a major priority of every man and woman who wears a Maryland police agency uniform,” warned Bernadette DiPino, President of Maryland Chiefs of Police Association and chief of police for the Ocean City Police Department. “The fact that alcohol remains a significant contributor to traffic fatalities reminds us that we must continue to be vigilant.”

MWR Strategies, a respected research firm that has conducted *Checkpoint Strikeforce* campaign surveys since 2002, took the pulse of 800 adults in Maryland, the District of Columbia and Virginia in July 2009. Among the campaign's target audience of males aged 21-35, key findings include:

- The biggest fear amongst this group of local male drivers as a result of driving while intoxicated is killing or injuring someone else (75-percent), more than arrest (two-percent) or their own death (ten-percent).
- Nearly three-quarters (72-percent) of these local drivers perceive drunk driving as one of the most serious dangers faced on area roadways.
- More than nine-out-of-ten (93-percent) of this group of local male drivers support the use sobriety checkpoints.
- Nearly two-out-of-five (19-percent) of these local drivers said that they would (or have) changed their behavior knowing that sobriety checkpoints were being held in their area.

The statewide *Checkpoint Strikeforce* campaign combines proactive public education and stepped up enforcement efforts to effectively erase borders between jurisdictions in fighting drunk driving. A significant effort has been put toward an ad campaign and educational outreach in Maryland. The creative ads were written and produced to connect with the target audience of 21-35 year old males. The ads utilize the findings of the campaign's opinion poll to create messages that hit home with the target audience. More than 5500 ads will run on a total 16 broadcast stations, cable systems and radio stations in Maryland between August and December.

The campaign is supported in Maryland by a grant from the Maryland Department of Transportation's State Highway Administration's Highway Safety Office.

###

**Get more information at <http://www.checkpointstrikeforce.net/educate.html> and listen to the ads at <http://www.checkpointstrikeforce.net/mddui.html>.**