



Communications Office
Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles
Post Office Box 27412
Richmond, Virginia 23269



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: August 19, 2019

Contacts:

Washington Regional Alcohol Program

Kurt Erickson - (703) 893-0461

Eric Conrad - (202) 813-4815

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA LAUNCHES 18th ANNUAL CHECKPOINT STRIKEFORCE DUI ENFORCEMENT AND OUTREACH CAMPAIGN

New data shows that nearly half of men in Virginia ages 21-35 have driven after having a few drinks or been driven by someone who had a few drinks.

RICHMOND – Today marks the launch of Virginia’s 18th annual **Checkpoint Strikeforce** DUI law enforcement and public education campaign in Virginia. The increased enforcement will take place from August 16th through Labor Day weekend and resume periodically through key moments like Halloween, Thanksgiving, and New Year’s Eve.

“Last year, Virginia saw a 12% (12.1%) increase in alcohol-related traffic deaths on the Commonwealth’s roadways. Such an increase should alarm every Virginian, as it’s both disturbing and unacceptable,” said **Virginia State Police Colonel Gary T. Settle**. “I can assure you that all Virginia troopers will be actively participating in this year’s Checkpoint Strikeforce enforcement efforts alongside our local law enforcement partners. Such a life-threatening trend only motivates every one of us even more to protect the lives of Virginians.”

The campaign launch is supported by new research from local partner Lake Research who, last month, conducted a survey of Virginia drivers that are most likely to drive after drinking: 21 to 35-year-old males. The research showed that nearly half (49%) of men surveyed admitted to having driven after having a few drinks or being driven by someone who had a few drinks. Additionally, a strong majority (92%) of young men believe it is important to make a plan to get home safely before you go out for the night, but less than two-thirds (57%) frequently plan ahead for a safe ride home.

“Despite understanding the importance of finding a safe ride home and the increase in the prevalence of services like rideshare apps, drunk driving incidents in the Commonwealth remain unacceptably high,” said **Richard Holcomb, Commissioner of the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles**. “The increased law enforcement presence in conjunction with an advertising campaign is designed to encourage responsible decision making and keep our roads safer for all.”

Last year in Virginia, 278 people lost their lives in alcohol-related traffic crashes representing over a third (33.94%) of all Virginia traffic fatalities in 2018. Another 19,790 people were convicted of a DUI in the

Commonwealth. During last year's Labor Day weekend alone, Virginia State troopers arrested 72 drunk drivers, averaging a DUI arrest every 80 minutes. Checkpoint Strikeforce is a crucial joint effort between public and private partners that works to stop these fatalities through surround-sound persuasion campaigning and high-visibility enforcement that reminds likely offenders to get a safe ride home or face arrest.

Partnering with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's "Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over" enforcement mobilization, approximately 98 law enforcement agencies—including local and Virginia State Police—will operate 120 checkpoints and 640 saturation patrols from Aug. 16 through Sept. 3, 2019.

Complementing the high visibility enforcement, Checkpoint Strikeforce is sponsoring an advertising campaign called "Act Like It." The 30-second spot debuted in 2018, built on public opinion research that shows the target audience strongly agrees (81% with 94% agreeing overall) that "people who drink and drive are not acting like responsible adults." The advertisements remind viewers that drinking and driving is irresponsible—if you're old enough to drink, act like it. Get a safe ride home. The ad can be viewed here: <https://youtu.be/pKvpKLgnc9I>

###

Checkpoint Strikeforce is part of a research-based multi-state, zero tolerance initiative designed to get impaired drivers off the roads using checkpoints and patrols along with education about the dangers and consequences of driving while intoxicated. Virginia's Checkpoint Strikeforce campaign is supported by a grant from the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles to the nonprofit and Falls Church-based Washington Regional Alcohol Program (WRAP).