

Lifewire: Simple reminders for a safer holiday season

by Ven_Griva

Every U.S. president since Ronald Reagan in 1981 has proclaimed December as National Drunk and Drugged Driving Prevention Month.

The week between Christmas and New Year's Day is generally considered by transportation officials to be one of the most dangerous times to be on the road. Alcohol and icy roads make a dangerous mix.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, in 2005, 16,885 Americans died in alcohol-related motor vehicle crashes, accounting for 39 percent of all traffic-related deaths in the United States.

Every 30 minutes, nearly 50 times a day, someone in America dies in an alcohol-related crash. Hundreds of thousands more are injured each year. According to the NHTSA, about 3 in every 10 Americans will be involved in an alcohol-related crash at some point in their lives.

Although thousands of people die or are injured in alcohol-related motor vehicle crashes each year in the United States, effective measures to prevent these deaths and injuries do exist.

That's why the administration of President George W. Bush is joining with national, state and local highway safety and law enforcement officials to remind everyone this holiday season to always designate a sober driver before a holiday party or event involving alcohol.

"The holiday season is supposed to be a time for family, friends and festive celebrations, but it is unfortunately also a time when authorities see a tragic jump in the number of alcohol-related highway fatalities each year between Thanksgiving and New Year's," said U.S. Transportation Secretary Mary E. Peters. "That's why we are out early reminding everyone this holiday season, if you catch a buzz, catch a ride.

"Designating a sober driver before the party begins is just one of several, simple steps to remember to help avoid a tragic crash or an arrest for impaired driving," she said, while offering these other simple reminders for a safer holiday season:

- Don't even think about getting behind the wheel of your vehicle if you've been out drinking.

- If you are impaired, call a taxi, use mass transit, or get a sober friend or family member to come and get you.

- Or just stay where you are and sleep it off until you are sober.

- Take the keys and never let a friend leave your sight if you think they are about to drive while impaired.

Peters also said if you are hosting a party this holiday season, remind your guests to plan ahead, always offer alcohol-free beverages during the event and make sure all of your guests leave with a sober driver.

FLYING OBJECTS

New Year's Eve parties can be all fun and games, fun that is until a Champagne cork pops someone in the eye.

The folks at the Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas want to remind anyone who plans to party with Champagne or any other sparkling wine that exploding corks can cause serious eye injuries such as ruptured globes, detached retinas and painful bruising.

Dr. Preston Blomquist, an ophthalmologist at the center, offers the following tips for keeping the pain out of Champagne:

- Chill Champagne and sparkling wine to at least 45 degrees; a cork in a cold bottle is less likely to pop unexpectedly.

- Hold down the cork with the palm of your hand while removing the wire hood.

- Point the bottle away from people and hold it at a 45-degree angle.

- Place a towel over the entire top of the bottle, grasp the cork, and slowly and firmly twist to break the seal. Hold the bottle firmly with one hand and use the other hand to slowly turn the cork with a slight upward pull. Continue until the cork is almost out of the neck. Counter the outward force of the cork by applying downward pressure just as the cork breaks free from the bottle.

E-mail Ven Griva or write to P.O. Box 120190, San Diego, CA 92112.

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