

Governor's proclamation, 'tie one on' event kick off December's DUII-prevention efforts

by Bend Weekly News Sources

A ceremony marking the signing of a proclamation with Oregon traffic safety leaders and MADD "tying one on" police patrol cars will kickoff the holiday season's DUII enforcement campaign. Patrol cars from the Oregon State Police, Oregon State Sheriff's Association and Oregon Association Chiefs of Police, as well as numerous other cars, will get the symbolic ribbon at 1:30 p.m. Friday, Dec. 1, at the Department of Public Safety Standards and Training headquarters in Salem. Friday's event will highlight how law enforcement, MADD and others will be partnering this season in saturation patrols to prevent impaired driving fatalities. It also kicks off the "Drunk Driving, Over the Limit, Under Arrest" national campaign. The December effort is the largest joint DUII-prevention campaign that Oregon has held in several years. With the holiday season "and traffic" in high gear, Gov. Ted Kulongoski signed a proclamation declaring December as Drinking and Drugged Driving Awareness Month in Oregon. As the governor himself will be traveling, a representative of his office will join law enforcement officials and other safety advocates at Friday's event. The kickoff will be held in the multipurpose room at DPSST headquarters, 4190 Aumsville Road SE in Salem. "Driving while impaired by alcohol or other drugs is a leading factor in traffic fatalities in Oregon and across the nation," said Gretchen McKenzie, program manager for impaired driving prevention at the Oregon Department of Transportation Safety Division. During the New Year's Day and Christmas holiday periods for the past 10 years "35 of the 85 traffic fatalities in Oregon were alcohol-related. In other words, alcohol has been a factor in 41 percent of Oregon traffic deaths around those holidays. "Getting out the word about the severity of the problem and enacting stricter laws have helped reduce DUII fatalities, but impaired driving is still one of the top three factors in traffic deaths in Oregon," she said. "The other two are speed and failure to use safety restraints." Laws alone cannot protect travelers. Here are things drivers can do to protect themselves:

Don't drink and drive and don't ride with anyone who has too much to drink.

Never use illegal drugs.

Volunteer to be a designated driver.

Take their keys.

If hosting a gathering, provide non-alcoholic beverages.

Use public transit or local drive-home services provided by taxis and other companies

Always use a seat belt.

Avoid travel after midnight, especially on weekends and holidays.

Drive defensively at all times.

Report Drunk drivers by calling 1-800-DRUNK or dialing 911.

Friday's kickoff event will include Chuck Hayes, chair of the Governor's Advisory Committee on DUII; Joe O'Leary, a senior policy analyst in the Governor's Office; Mary Stewart, executive Director of Northern Oregon MADD; and Troy E. Costales, administrator of the ODOT Transportation Safety Division. In addition to the event's DPSST hosts and law enforcement officials, representatives at this large event will include DMV, Oregon State Marine Board, Oregon Liquor Control Commission, Department of Human Services, Department of Justice and Oregon District Attorney's Association.

The governor's proclamation is atop Friday's agenda for the Governor's Advisory Committee on DUII. The committee will meet from 9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. in Conference Room A-235 at DPSST headquarters. For more information about the committee or Oregon's DUII programs, visit www.oregon.gov/ODOT/TS/impaireddrivingprogram.shtml or contact Gretchen McKenzie at (503) 986-4183.

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