

OPP launch Festive RIDE program

The OPP took the rare step of thanking Ontario drivers ahead of their 2013 Festive RIDE (Reduce Impaired Driving Everywhere) campaign for not driving impaired over the holidays and for helping them get impaired drivers off the roads.

The reason for the early thank-you was OPP recognize that the vast majority of drivers do understand that enforcement is only part of the solution and that driving sober is the single most important factor in ending the numerous deaths related to impaired driving that occur on Ontario roads every year. Police consider these drivers to be among their most dedicated road safety partners because they share the responsibility of saving lives on roads through responsible driving behaviour.

The campaign runs to Jan. 2. According to OPP, the public can expect to see as many OPP Festive RIDE stops as ever during this year's campaign, in order to deal with the relatively small number of drivers who choose to get an impaired driving charge over the simpler and less costly solution of not getting behind the wheel after consuming alcohol. Unfortunately, the irresponsible behaviour of one driver can negatively affect the lives of many.

"I am calling on all road users to help us keep everyone safe over the holidays," said Chief Superintendent Don Bell, commander of the OPP Highway Safety Division. "Never allow yourself to drink and drive, never allow someone you suspect is impaired by alcohol or drugs to drive and if you are out on the road and suspect that a driver is impaired, call 9-1-1."

"I would like to thank in advance the hundreds of thousands of drivers we know we can count on to take these simple but important measures to help us get everyone through the holiday safely," he added.

Deputy Commissioner Larry Beechey said recent national statistics "tell us that there were 90,277 impaired driving incidents in Canada in 2011 and I am proud to say that Ontario had one of the lowest impaired driving rates among all of the provinces that year."

"We attribute this to a combination of targeted police enforcement and education efforts by all safety partners, combined with the motoring public's generally favourable compliance with impaired driving laws, their awareness of the risks and their willingness to be a part of the solution," he added.

OPP is also reminding drivers that there is no safe amount of alcohol consumption when driving. This is evident every year in the number of warn-range suspensions OPP issues to drivers whose blood alcohol concentration (BAC) falls within the 0.05 to 0.08 range.

Over the last two Festive RIDE campaigns (2011 and 2012), OPP officers issued a total of 1,208 warn-range suspensions over and above the 1,375 impaired driving charges they laid throughout the province. Those who are issued a warn-range suspension immediately lose their licence at the roadside and are not allowed to drive from that point on for a minimum of three days.

OPP is asking the public to join in on the conversation on Facebook during the campaign. Share your thoughts, stories and personal experiences with impaired drivers/driving, as well as any positive stories about people you encounter over the holidays whose actions and decisions about drinking and driving contribute to a safe holiday season on our roads.