

OPP ready to go with Festive RIDE campaign

Last year (2015), Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) investigated 65 road collisions in which a drug-impaired driver was found to be the primary cause of the crash.

So far this year (2016), the same factor was behind 59 such collisions on OPP-patrolled roads. Tragically, 35 people have died so far this year in alcohol/drug-related crashes, which has the total number of road deaths in this causal category over the last 10 years nearing the 650 mark.

With its annual Festive Reduce Impaired Driving Everywhere (RIDE) campaign getting underway, OPP is determined to dispel the myth that driving while high on drugs cannot be detected by police and is a safe alternative to driving under the influence of alcohol. Through the OPP Drug Evaluation and Classification Program, officers are trained as Drug Recognition Evaluators, giving them the authority and tools needed to detect drug-impaired drivers – something they hope no driver gives them a reason to use during the holidays. Over the coming weeks, OPP officers hope to conduct a successful campaign in which every single driver they pull over in a Festive RIDE stop is a sober, drug-free driver.

“The solution to ending impaired-related road deaths is a simple one,” OPP Deputy Commissioner Brad Blair observed. “Never drive if you are impaired by alcohol or drugs, and know that you are doing the right thing by calling 9-1-1 to report an impaired driver. By working together, we can positively influence driver behaviour in an effort to make sober, drug-free driving a social norm during the holidays and throughout the year.”

“This year's Festive RIDE campaign reminds us that we all have a role to play in preventing impaired driving,” Community Safety and Correctional Services Minister David Oraziotti added. “As we get together with family and friends this holiday season, plan ahead. Arrange for a designated driver and if you see someone you think is impaired, arrange a ride for them or suggest alternate arrangements. These simple steps can go a long way to keeping our families, friends, and roads safe every day of the year.”

As of Oct. 2, Ontario legislation carries penalties for drug-impaired driving that match those already in place for alcohol-impaired drivers.

Illegal drugs are not the only drugs that can impair one's ability to drive and result in drivers losing their licences.