

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Seat-Belt Use, Impaired Driving a Focus for ‘Operation Safe Holiday’

Agencies Encourage SaferRide App use for Safe Rides Home

Harrisburg, PA (November 18, 2015)

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT), Pennsylvania State

Police and Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board (PLCB) are combining enforcement, education and smartphone technology to make this holiday season a safer one through “Operation Safe Holiday” and the SaferRide app.

During “Operation Safe Holiday,” law enforcement agencies statewide will focus on nighttime seat-belt use and impaired driving. The SaferRide app, developed by the U.S. Department of Transportation and National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, helps individuals arrange a taxi or contact a friend to get a safe ride home after drinking.

“Unfortunately, the holiday season turns tragic for many families due to crashes and deaths on our roadways,” PennDOT Secretary Leslie S. Richards said. “While we’re partnering with law enforcement and other safety partners, we urge the public to do their part to keep the season safe – always buckle up and never drive impaired.”

The operation begins with statewide Click It or Ticket seat-belt enforcement that runs from November 23 to November 30. Law enforcement agencies also will conduct sobriety checkpoints, roving patrols and regular traffic safety patrols on Thanksgiving Eve, November 25, and from November 28 through the New Year’s holiday to crack down on drivers impaired by drugs or alcohol.

According to PennDOT data, the holiday season continues to be the leading time period for traffic crashes. The Thanksgiving holiday period, including the weekends before and after the holiday as well as the day itself, experienced the highest number of crashes and fatalities of any major holiday season last year. A total of 4,311 crashes and 39 fatalities occurred statewide during the Thanksgiving travel period. The Christmas and New Year’s travel periods, including the weekend before Christmas, Christmas, the weekend before New Year’s, New Year’s and the weekend after, saw 4,184 crashes and 41 fatalities.

“In 2014 alone, there were 440 fatal crashes involving unbuckled occupants throughout the commonwealth,” said Acting State Police Commissioner Tyree C. Blocker. “This is just one example of how deaths from being unbuckled or driving impaired are, in many cases, preventable.”

Additionally, during the Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year’s holidays last year, 1,039 of the statewide crashes involved a driver impaired by drugs or alcohol, with 35 fatalities in those crashes. In that same period, there were 937 crashes with unbuckled occupants, with 32 fatalities in those crashes.

The public can help make the season a safer one by never driving impaired.

Individuals can download the free SaferRide app on Android and Apple devices from the Google Play or iTunes stores. Once downloaded to a smart phone, the SaferRide app provides three simple options to a user: review and call taxi services available in the area, call a contact programmed into the app in advance and view a map of the user's location.

The PLCB will spread the word about the app this holiday season on its websites, at Fine Wine & Good Spirits Stores, at licensed locations and through social media. Printed material distributed at Fine Wine & Good Spirits stores and posters made available to licensed bars, restaurants, hotels, taverns and other social settings feature a QR code that customers and patrons can scan using smartphones for direct access to a PLCB website featuring information about the SaferRide app and direct links to download it.

“For many years Senator Stewart Greenleaf has pursued a way to help ensure Pennsylvanians have a safe way to get home after celebrating,” said PLCB member Mike Negra. “Thanks to his encouragement and the federal government’s development of this app, we’re happy to spread awareness of the SaferRide app as a safe alternative to get home.”

The PLCB is also making available on its SaferRide app website a toolkit of promotional materials, including social media ads and web banners. Individuals and organizations interested in promoting the SaferRide app are encouraged to download these resources from the website and spread awareness through their own networks of partners, fans and followers.

The PLCB regulates the distribution of alcoholic beverages in Pennsylvania, operates more than 600 wine and spirits stores statewide and licenses more than 20,000 alcoholic beverage producers and retailers. The PLCB also works to reduce and prevent dangerous and underage drinking through partnerships with schools, community groups and licensees. Taxes and store profits – totaling more than \$14.5 billion since the agency’s inception – are returned to Pennsylvania’s General Fund, and the PLCB also provides financial support for the Pennsylvania State Police Bureau of Liquor Control Enforcement, the Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs, other state agencies and local municipalities across the state. For more information about the PLCB, visit www.lcb.state.pa.us.

The holiday seat-belt and DUI enforcement are funded by part of PennDOT’s statewide distribution of \$6.5 million in NHTSA enforcement monies this federal fiscal year. For more information on PennDOT’s highway safety efforts visit

www.JustDrivePA.org.

The public can join the discussion using the hashtag #PASafeHoliday.

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PR# Safe Holiday