

State launches “Impaired Driving Enforcement” campaign targets texters, drunk, and impaired

The Highway Safety Division of the Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS), the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT), State and local police today launched the Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over (DSOGPO) education and enforcement mobilization to get impaired drivers off the road. The campaign, funded by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), which runs from August 12 through Labor Day, will include a special focus on Work Zone Safety, educating motorists to be safe when traveling through work zones

This summer, there have been five work zone crashes – all involving alcohol – on Massachusetts roadways. Despite numerous cautions – including orange cones, signage, lighting and, police details – people in work zones are vulnerable to drivers who are impaired, inattentive or speeding. Between 2011 and 2014, there were 22 fatal crashes in Massachusetts work zones.

“MassDOT’s top priority is to protect its roadway crews, contract crews and the law enforcement officers who are keeping them safe, as they perform work inside of construction zones,” said Thomas J. Tinlin, MassDOT Highway Administrator. “We want to make sure they all return home safely to their families every day. At the first sign of a work zone, drivers need to slow down, and pay close attention to the road ahead.”

In or out of work zones, impaired driving continues to be a major factor in fatal crashes in Massachusetts.

“There have been 5 Work Zone crashes this summer – all involving an impaired driver,” said Daniel Bennett, Secretary of the Executive Office of Public Safety. “We’re working closely with the Department of Transportation to assure that police have the resources they need to enforce our impaired driving laws, particularly ensuring the safety of those working to maintain our roads.”

“Drunk or impaired drivers have no place on Massachusetts roads – during the Labor Day holiday or any other time of the year,” said Superintendent of the Massachusetts State Police, Colonel Richard D. McKeon. “We want drivers to know that we are taking a zero-tolerance approach to impaired driving.”

“We lost 133 people in crashes involving a driver who was over the legal limit of intoxication in 2014,” said Jeff Larason, Director of the Highway Safety Division. “‘The Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over’ campaign is both an education campaign and an enforcement effort to promote sober driving and work zone safety. We want motorists to be aware of these issues particularly as the Labor Day holiday approaches.”

The DSOGP0 campaign will include TV and radio ads aimed directly at drivers during the Labor Day Weekend, and will focus on the human toll and legal ramifications of impaired driving.

The Highway Safety Division of EOPSS is also providing funding to the Alcoholic Beverages Control Commission to focus its enforcement efforts on bars throughout Massachusetts that have been most frequently identified through court notices as the last establishments to sell alcohol to convicted drunk drivers. HSD is also providing grant funding for state and local police patrols near active work zones.

Nationally, Labor Day Weekend is one of the deadliest times of the year in terms of impaired driving fatalities. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, on

average, over 10,000 people died each year between 2010 and 2014 in drunk-driving crashes. During the 2014 Labor Day holiday weekend, 40 percent of the fatal crashes involved drunk drivers – the highest percentage over the five years 2010 to 2014. In 2014, approximately 1 in 5 children killed on US roads (14 and younger) were passengers in drunk-driving crashes.

Tips for motorists:

Plan ahead – use a ride sharing or taxi service, the MBTA, or a designated driver if you will be consuming alcohol and then travelling.

Slow down and obey all posted speed limits, especially at the first sign of a work zone. Speeding violations are double the original fine when they occur in a work zone.

Stay off your devices – even if you're hands free, talking on the phone causes cognitive distraction. There is a lot happening in work zones, and you need to pay attention to the signs.

Be alert – keep your eyes on the road and looking ahead. Traffic conditions can change quickly and unexpectedly in work zones.