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News Release

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Sheriff Champagne calls for New Year's Eve Holiday Safety

New Year's Eve marks the annual tradition of bidding farewell to the past year and ringing in the New Year with celebrations that often include alcohol as a part of the festivities. All too often, people drive after they have had too much to drink.

In 2009, there were 10,839 people killed in the U.S. in alcohol impaired-driving crashes-32% of total traffic fatalities for the year. "Busy roadways throughout the holidays always increase the risk of more drunken drivers," said Sheriff Champagne.

"Yes, the holidays are about celebrating with family and friends, but it's important that you celebrate safely. You can help reduce holiday traffic accidents by having a plan *before* the New Year's Eve party starts. It's everyone's responsibility to plan how they will get home safely. Promote the designated driver program, respect each designated driver, and don't let friends drive drunk," cautioned Sheriff Champagne.

Keep in mind that just being sober on New Year's Eve, doesn't guarantee that the other driver is. There is no way to predict when an alcohol-related accident will happen. However, there are some things that drivers can do to reduce their chances of being injured, and more easily recognize a potentially dangerous situation.

Warning Signs of an Intoxicated Driver

- Driver traveling ten miles per hour below the posted speed limit
- Driver suddenly stops for no apparent reason
- Traveling too closely to other vehicles
- Braking erratically
- Inconsistent use of turn signals
- Driving without turning headlights on
- Drifting in a straight line at a slight angle to the roadway

To Protect Yourself

- Call your local law enforcement agency and report the driver: Take note of the driver's exact location and be prepared to give an accurate description of the car including make, model, color and most important, the license plate number
- Always wear your seatbelt
- Do not follow a suspected intoxicated driver too closely because he or she may make sudden stops
- Do not disregard any traffic signals in an attempt to keep the driver in sight
- Do not compromise your own safety by getting overly involved with what the drunk driver is doing
- If the driver stops, do not attempt to detain him or her