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N e w s R e l e a s e

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St. Charles Parish Sheriff's Office Adds Tool to D.W.I. Enforcement

The St. Charles Parish Sheriff's Office will ramp up D.W.I. enforcement with an additional tool. Effective this Memorial Day Holiday, deputies will seek search warrants to draw blood from arrested suspects who refuse to take the breath test. Additionally a certified Drug Recognition Expert will be summoned to evaluate arrestees for the use of narcotics who appear to be impaired on substances other than alcohol.

This should result in a much higher conviction rate for those who choose to drink and drive, said Sheriff Greg Champagne. We are ramping up our efforts to take drunk and drugged drivers off of our highways through the use of these enforcement techniques, the Sheriff said.

In 2007 Louisiana's breath alcohol test refusal rate was 39%, ranking the state the fourth worst in the nation, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. As a result, The State of Louisiana has increased the period of time in which a suspected drunk driver's license is suspended from six months to one year. However, that does not seem to be enough to deter arrestees from refusing the breath test in hopes of beating a D.W.I. charge, Champagne said. We want everyone to have a fun and enjoyable holiday, but we hope by enforcing this policy it will reduce the number of serious injuries and deaths due to impaired driving. Under this new policy, refusing the breath test won't diminish the chances of a conviction. Blood can be drawn and analyzed regardless of a suspect's refusal to take the breath test. It will have the effect of strengthening a drunk driving case.

This weekend will see the beginning of a No refusal policy in St. Charles Parish that is growing in Louisiana and nationwide. This effort is being endorsed by The Louisiana Highway Traffic Safety Commission, The Louisiana Sheriff's Association and The Louisiana District Attorney's Association.