



pennsylvania
STATE POLICE

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Wolf Administration Urges Seat-Belt Use, Sober Driving Ahead of Holiday Travel Period

PennDOT, State Police hold Media Event, Child Safety Seat Checks to Complement National Campaign

Harrisburg, PA – Ahead of the holiday travel period and nationwide Click It or Ticket “Operation Safe Holiday” enforcement effort, Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) Secretary Leslie S. Richards, Pennsylvania State Police Commissioner Tyree C. Blocker, and the Penn State Health’s Life Lion Critical Care Transport Unit today urged the public to secure all vehicle passengers properly, and designate a sober driver during holiday parties through the new year.

“The holidays can yield some of the highest impaired driving-related crash totals Pennsylvania has,” PennDOT Secretary Leslie S. Richards said. “PennDOT continues to partner with our brothers and sisters in law enforcement to educate the public on safe holiday travel and crash reduction. We encourage all drivers to do the right thing to protect themselves and their families.”

Troopers and other state police members certified as Child Passenger Safety Technicians will conduct no-cost car seat fittings at various locations from November 20 through December 3, no appointment necessary. Car seats will be checked for suitability, and participants will receive instruction on proper installation and child restraint.

“Drivers with small children must use a properly installed child passenger safety seat for every trip, whether it's around the corner to the grocery store or across the state to visit family,” said Pennsylvania State Police Commissioner Tyree C. Blocker. “Especially during the busy holiday travel season, we encourage parents will take advantage of the no-cost resources available to help ensure their child passenger safety seat is installed correctly.”

Under Pennsylvania law, children under the age of four must be properly restrained in an approved child safety seat. The law mandates that children under two-years-old be secured in a rear-facing car seat until the child outgrows the maximum weight and height limits designated by the manufacturer. Children from age four to age eight must use an appropriate booster seat.

Children ages eight to 18 must wear a seat-belt when riding anywhere in a vehicle and all drivers and front-seat passengers 18-years-old and older are required to buckle up.

During enforcement operations, law enforcement will conduct seat belt and impaired driving enforcement simultaneously because unbelted and impaired driving crashes are shown to be significant contributors to traffic injuries and deaths, especially during nighttime hours.

According to PennDOT data, during the Thanksgiving holiday travel period, including the weekend before and after the holiday as well as the day itself, there were 3,962 crashes and 38 fatalities in those crashes statewide. The Christmas and New Year's travel periods, including the weekend before Christmas, New Year's and the weekend after, saw 4,646 crashes and 41 fatalities.

Additionally, during the Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's holidays last year, 1,072 of the statewide crashes involved a driver impaired by drugs or alcohol, with 27 fatalities in those crashes. In that same period, there were 1,015 crashes with unbuckled occupants, with 26 fatalities in those crashes.

"Each holiday season, Life Lion typically sees a 20 to 25 percent increase in flight volume, due largely to traffic accidents," said Joe DePatto, flight paramedic, Penn State Health. "We would love to see this year be safer on area roadways and for those numbers to go in the opposite direction."

Officials also encouraged travelers to use the SaferRide app. The app, developed in 2014 by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration in an effort to curb drunk driving, is available for free download on Android and Apple devices and is a great option to facilitate a safe ride home after you've been drinking. Once the app is downloaded, you can use it to call a taxi or a friend by identifying your location so you can be picked up.

The holiday seat-belt and DUI enforcement are funded by part of PennDOT's statewide distribution of National Highway Traffic Safety Administration enforcement monies this federal fiscal year. For more information on PennDOT's highway safety efforts visit, www.penndot.gov/safety.

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

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