



## NEWS RELEASE

*For Immediate Release*

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### **Drivers reminded to play it safe this Labor Day holiday weekend by not driving if they have been drinking alcohol**

*Georgia law enforcement officers will be looking to take all impaired drivers they find off the road and to jail*

**(ATLANTA)** - The Governor's Office of Highway Safety joins state and local law enforcement officers in reminding everyone to not get behind the wheel if alcohol is going to be part of their Labor Day holiday celebration.

Many Georgians will be on the road during the extended holiday weekend traveling to the beach, mountains or lake for a final summer vacation, while others will be cranking up their tailgate parties for the opening weekend of the college football season.

If alcohol is going to be part of your weekend plans during the holiday weekend, then make sure you plan a ride with a sober driver before the weekend starts," Harris Blackwood, Director of the Governor's Office of Highway Safety said. "From friends to ride services, there are too many options available that will save lives by keeping drunk drivers off of our roads."

According to the Georgia Department of Public Safety, nine people were killed in traffic crashes during last year's 78-hour Labor Day holiday travel period in Georgia.

While that number does represent a 30 percent drop in the number of fatalities from the 2016 Labor Day holiday travel period in the state, the latest data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration shows that one out of every four traffic deaths in Georgia is alcohol-related.

The Georgia State Patrol and local law enforcement will be looking to prevent traffic crashes, injuries and deaths with increased patrols during the holiday weekend as they maintain a year-round zero tolerance policy by taking all impaired drivers they find to jail.

These officers will also looking for violators of Georgia's Hands-Free Law that went into effect on July 1 as many agencies are now issuing citations for drivers who are seen having a phone in their hand while on the road.

"We want everyone to get out and enjoy all the great places and activities our state has to offer but we want everyone to get home safely," Blackwood said. "That means don't get behind the wheel if you have been drinking because there are going to be a large number of law enforcement officers on the roads ready to take impaired drivers to jail."

In addition to ride services, AAA's Tow-To-Go program is offering free tows and rides up to 10 miles from Friday, August 31 until 6:00 a.m. on Tuesday, September 4. Those interested in the free ride can visit [https://autoclubsouth.aaa.com/safety/tow\\_to\\_go.aspx](https://autoclubsouth.aaa.com/safety/tow_to_go.aspx) for more information or call (855) 2-TOW-2-GO during Labor Day weekend.

The Governor's Office of Highway Safety also offers these tips for all drivers who are going to be on the road during the Labor Day holiday weekend:

- Leave earlier for your destination because the extra traffic on the road may increase travel times.
- Don't try to make up time by speeding.
- Make sure everyone in your vehicle is wearing their seat belts and all children under 8 are riding in an approved child passenger safety seat.
- Plan rest stops as needed and alternate drivers if possible.
- Limit driver distractions by staying off phones. Find a safe place to pull off the road if you need to speak to someone or check your navigation.

For more information on the Governor's Office of Highway Safety's (GOHS) impaired driving awareness program, visit <https://www.gahighwaysafety.org>. Follow GOHS on social media at [www.facebook.com/gahighwayafety](https://www.facebook.com/gahighwayafety) , @gohsgeorgia on Twitter and Instagram or GOHSGEORGIA on YouTube.

\*\*\*\*\***MEDIA ALERT**\*\*\*\*\*

**Director Blackwood and GOHS personnel will be staffing the Governor's Highway Safety Association's Annual Meeting that our office is hosting in Atlanta August 25-30 and we will not be available for interviews. Interviews can be scheduled for media outlets who are staffing the GHSA Meeting at the Westin Peachtree Plaza. Media outlets can find video/audio cuts with Director Blackwood and video/photos can be found at the link provided in this release. Please remember the assets in this link are raw sound and video that are available for media outlets to edit and produce according to each outlet's editorial standards and judgement. If you need any other elements for highway safety stories this week, please contact the Georgia State Patrol or your local law enforcement agency.**

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/0igjgis3xc6li5a/Labor%20Day%20Drive%20Sober%202018.mpg?dl=0>

Director Blackwood

Cut 1 "What we have this weekend is the convergence of a lot of things. The start of football season. The last hurrah of summer where a lot of people are going to the beach or mountains or somewhere to get away from the weekend. Just a lot of things going on to attract a lot of people to the various parts of our state. It is a great thing to do but we want you to come home safely. To do that we need to again ask the public to be our partners in buckling that seat belt. Making sure they are alert when they are driving and make sure they have got their phone secure and out of their hands according to the laws of Georgia."

Cut 2 "People are going to tailgate parties this week. They are going to a friends for a barbecue or whatever they are

going to be doing. They plan on what they are going to take and they plan on how they are going to get there. The most important thing you can do is to plan how you are going to get home safely. You can do that. It can happen. We want you to get home safely. We want people to plan by calling a ride-share service, staying where they are at or finding a designated driver. Either one of those three is an option that can your life and can save the lives of others."

Cut 3 "I often tell people that if the second drink is touching our lips, you have waited too long. You will need to plan while you are sober and alert of how you are going to get home or where you are going to stay. It is so easy to do. A DUI in Georgia can cost you \$10,000 or more depending on the choices you make. I would rather you spend that \$10,000 somewhere else. We need people to make that plan. It is so easy to say I am going to be the designated driver and 'y'all have a good time. Give that person the biggest hamburger, the biggest steak. Make sure they get something good to eat as a way to say thank you for being the sober ride home for all of us."

Cut 4 "If you have that device in your hand, you are in violation of the law. The law is very clear on that. We want people to know you can buy a device to make it a speaker or go into your ear for less than 20 bucks. That keeps both eyes on the road and both hands on the wheel and you will be safe when driving. We are seeing a decrease in the overall number in traffic fatalities and we hope that number will continue. We are also seeing an increase in the number of citations for distracted driving. We want people to be safe and we want them to get home safely."

**(END RELEASE)**