



## NEWS RELEASE

*For Immediate Release*

November 20, 2018

**Contact:**

Robert Hydrick  
Communications Manager  
404.463.1751 (o) | 404.859.0141 (c)  
robert.hydrick@gohs.ga.gov

Katie Fallon  
Public Information Officer  
404-463-0611(o) || 404-463-0611 (c)  
[kfallon@gohs.ga.gov](mailto:kfallon@gohs.ga.gov)

### **Buckle Up before getting on the road this Thanksgiving holiday season**

*Law enforcement officers will be taking drunk drivers off the road and to jail*

**(ATLANTA)** - The Georgia Department of Public Safety and the Governor's Office of Highway Safety ask motorists to protect their 'giblets' when driving by always wearing their seat belt and never getting behind the wheel if they are legally too impaired to drive.

With AAA predicting more than 1.5 million people will be traveling by vehicle during the Thanksgiving holiday travel period in Georgia, state and local law enforcement officers will be on the road throughout the extended holiday weekend looking to prevent crashes by getting motorists to obey the speed limit, buckle their seat belts and to take drunk drivers off the road.

The Georgia State Patrol is reminding motorists who will be traveling during the Thanksgiving holiday to plan their trips carefully and put safety first, Colonel Mark W. McDonough, Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Public Safety said. "State troopers will be out on the roads keeping a close eye out for seat belt violations, drunk drivers, and other traffic offenses that could possibly cause a serious crash. So, make sure you plan your trips carefully. Ensure that everyone in the vehicle is wearing a seatbelt and that children are properly restrained. Don't drive impaired or distracted, and obey the posted speed limit."

According to the Georgia Department of Public Safety, 12 people died in traffic crashes during last year's Thanksgiving holiday travel period, which was 40 percent lower than the number of traffic deaths during the same time in 2016. The 102-hour travel period begins this year at 6:00 p.m. on Wednesday, November 21 and will end at 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, November 25.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates seat belts saved more than 14,000 lives in the United States in 2016 and that another 2,456 lives would have been saved that year had everyone wore their seat belt for every

vehicle trip.

While so many will be traveling over the holidays, GOHS joins law enforcement officers in reminding everyone to not get behind the wheel if they have been drinking alcohol and are legally too impaired to drive.

According to NHTSA, the increase in the number of alcohol-related traffic fatalities has made Thanksgiving the deadliest holiday on roads in the United States.

More than 800 people have been killed in alcohol-impaired driving crashes in the United States during the Thanksgiving holiday weekend over the last five years and one out of every three deaths during the holiday weekend is alcohol-related.

Many of the alcohol-related traffic deaths happen on Thanksgiving Eve when people go out to visit with hometown friends.

"Unfortunately, too many Thanksgiving celebrations are ruined when a family member is killed in a traffic crash during the holiday weekend," Harris Blackwood, Director of the Governor's Office of Highway Safety said. "Your son or daughter is never too old to be reminded to ride with a sober driver or ride service or you can offer to give your child a ride home. There is nothing to be embarrassed about when it comes to keeping impaired drivers off our roads and making sure the people we care about get home safely."

Another option for those who are too impaired to drive is AAA's Tow-To-Go program, which offers free tows and rides up to 10 miles from Wednesday, November 21 until 6:00 a.m. on Sunday, November 25. 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 the Thanksgiving holiday 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 Thanksgiving holiday travel period:

- 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 or booster 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.

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