

# Drunk driving can make holiday season deadly

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U.S. agencies countering with roadside detection, ignition-lock laws, new blood-alcohol technology.

(HealthDay)—The holiday season is one of the most dangerous times of the year on U.S. roads. Between Thanksgiving and New Year's Eve, as many as 900 people nationwide could die in crashes caused by drunk driving, safety officials report.

"We've made tremendous strides in changing the social norms associated with drinking and driving, but the problem is far from solved," Jonathan Adkins, deputy executive director for the Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA) said in an association news release.

"Alcohol-impaired driving claimed 10,322 lives last year, an increase of 4.6 percent compared with 2011," he said. "That's an alarming statistic

and one we're committed to address."

The GHSA and its members—which include all 50 state [highway safety](#) offices—are joining federal and state police to launch the annual Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over program. The initiative combines high-visibility law enforcement with advertising and grassroots efforts to detect and deter drunk driving.

The program started Dec. 13 and continues through Jan. 1.

In an effort to reduce drunk driving, 18 states have ignition-interlock laws for first-time [drunk-driving](#) offenders. The GHSA is encouraging other states to implement such laws.

The association also is partnering with the U.S. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on a long-term study to assess best practices in state ignition-interlock laws. The results are expected to be released in early 2014.

The GHSA also is backing efforts to develop and test new technology called Driver Alcohol Detection System for Safety. The system has in-car sensors that measure [blood alcohol levels](#) by breath or touch to determine if the driver is below the legal limit for impairment. Although it holds promise, the technology is still in the early phase of development, according to the news release.

Many states have stepped up roadside enforcement programs and public-education campaigns.

The California Office of Traffic Safety, meanwhile, offers a smartphone app that provides maps showing the locations of bars that offer free, nonalcoholic drinks and other incentives to sober designated drivers. The

Maryland Highway Safety Office provides workshops to demonstrate how alcohol affects a person's ability to drive.

**More information:** The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more about [impaired driving](#).

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