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OPP Festive RIDE program targets alcohol and drug impaired drivers

Police know that the approaching holiday season brings an increase in the number of alcohol impaired drivers on Ontario roadways. This means there is likely to be more tragedy on our roads in the days ahead. The Ontario Provincial Police are setting up traffic stops around the province and around the clock as they kick off the 2015 Festive R.I.D.E. (Reduce Impaired Driving Everywhere) campaign. This highly effective public safety initiative will run throughout the holiday period from November 23 until January 2, 2016.

From January to October, the numbers of alcohol involved occurrences are up 3 percent over the same period last year. As of November 15th, of the 258 persons killed during that time period, 35 fatalities were attributed to alcohol consumption. Thirteen people died when their off-road vehicle was involved in a collision; 6 of those persons had been impaired by alcohol.

Police have seen the number of occurrences of Drug Impaired Driving rise in Ontario over the past year. Police are reminding the public during this Festive RIDE campaign that the OPP now have Drug Recognition officers with specialized training to identify drug impaired drivers. The OPP also have a significant number of officers who conduct standardized field sobriety tests on drivers who give police a reasonable suspicion of impairment by drugs.

?So far this year the OPP have laid over 6800 alcohol and drug impaired driving charges. This is an unbelievable statistic. There are many ways to get home after a party. Don't drink or do drugs and drive, it's just not worth it. I encourage everyone to have a plan to get home before they get behind the wheel this holiday season. Ontario Provincial Police officers will be vigilant about stopping vehicles and finding drivers who are impaired by any means,? said Brad Blair, Deputy Commissioner, Provincial Commander of Traffic Safety & Operational Support.

Last year the OPP charged 593 people with impaired-related charges during the Festive RIDE initiative. There were also 485 people who had their licenses suspended following a warning.

Police are also asking the public to call the authorities if you see someone who gets behind the wheel after they have been drinking.