



Hernando County Sheriff's Office

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Media Release

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Re: Drive Merry, Bright, and Sober This Holiday Season

Date: December 11, 2020

This holiday season, the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) is partnering with the Hernando County Sheriff's Office to share the message about the dangers of drunk driving. From 12-18-20 through 01-01-21 law enforcement will participate in the high-visibility national enforcement campaign, *Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over*. During this period, local law enforcement will show zero tolerance for drunk driving. Increased state and national messages about the dangers of driving impaired, coupled with enforcement and increased officers on the road, aim to drastically reduce drunk driving on our nation's roadways.

Sadly, the statistics prove that we have a lot of work to do to put an end to drunk driving. According to NHTSA, 10,511 people were killed in drunk-driving crashes in 2018. On average, more than 10,000 people were killed each year from 2014 to 2018 — one person was killed in a drunk-driving crash every 50 minutes in 2018. This is why the Hernando County Sheriff's Office is working with NHTSA to remind drivers that drunk driving is not only illegal, it is a matter of life and death. As you head out to the holiday festivities, remember: *Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over*.

"The holidays should be an enjoyable time for everyone; not a time of mourning the death of a loved one due to a drunk-driving crash. We need a commitment from every person who travels our roadways – no one gets behind the wheel after consuming alcoholic beverages. This is a campaign to get the message out that drunk driving is illegal, and it takes lives. Help us put an end to this senseless behavior," Sheriff Nienhuis said.

During the month of December 2018, 839 people lost their lives in traffic crashes involving a drunk driver. During the Christmas and New Year's Day holiday periods in 2018 alone, there were more drunk-driving-related fatalities (285) than during any other holiday period that year. These fatalities are preventable, and drivers must remember that driving impaired by any substance — alcohol or other drugs — is deadly, illegal, and selfish behavior.

The Hernando County Sheriff's Office and NHTSA are reminding citizens of the many resources available to get them home safely. "Drunk driving is not acceptable behavior. It is essential to plan a sober ride home before you ever leave for the party. That's why, during the holiday season, we will make zero exceptions and arrest all drunk drivers. There are just no excuses," Sheriff Nienhuis said.

The Hernando County Sheriff's Office recommends these safe alternatives to drinking and driving:

- Remember that it is never okay to drink and drive. Even if you've had only one alcoholic beverage, designate a sober driver or plan to use public transportation or a ride service to get home safely.
- If you see a drunk driver on the road, call 9-1-1.
- Do you have a friend who is about to drink and drive? Take the keys away and make arrangements to get your friend home safely.

For more information about the 2020 Holiday Season Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over campaign, visit www.nhtsa.gov/risky-driving/drunk-driving.

The Office of Sheriff:

The Office of the Sheriff is established by the Florida Constitution. As a constitutional officer, the Sheriff has the exclusive authority to administer his or her agency and is responsible for preserving the peace throughout the entire county, carrying out the laws of the state, the orders of Florida courts, and the ordinances of the Board of County Commissioners. The Sheriff is the chief law enforcement and correctional officer of the county.

Sheriff Al Nienhuis was initially appointed as the Sheriff of Hernando County by the Governor in January of 2011. He was then elected by the people of Hernando County in 2012, ran unopposed in 2016, and was re-elected in 2020. Sheriff Nienhuis remains accountable to the people of Hernando County.