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For Immediate Use

Lowering the limit is the best way to combat drink driving, says police chief

Lowering the limit for drink driving is the best way to combat the increasing problem of drink driving, says Scotland's top police officer responsible for road policing.

"With incidents of drink driving up for the third year in a row, we need to address this issue sooner rather than later," says Chief Constable John Vine, Chair of the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland (ACPOS) Road Policing Business Area.

As the festive season approaches, Scotland's eight police forces gear up to launch their annual, four-week long '*Festive Drink-Drug Driving Safety Campaign*' in conjunction with ACPOS, the Scottish Government and its road safety arm, *Road Safety Scotland*. The campaign kicks off at 9:30 a.m. on Friday 7 December with a launch in front of the Ninewells Hospital Accident & Emergency Department in Dundee and will run from 0700 hours on Friday until 0700 hours on Friday 4 January 2008.

Justice Secretary Kenny MacAskill said:

"Drinking and driving is irresponsible and its results can be fatal. While the police continue to enforce the law, we recognise that as a country we have a serious problem with alcohol that we must urgently address.

"Drink driving remains a constant thorn in efforts to make our roads and communities safer. It is the cause of far too many collisions, injuries and deaths on our roads.

"Although drink-driving limits across western Europe have been reduced, in Scotland the same limit has been in place for forty years. Scotland is now a different place from when that limit was first set and our relationship with alcohol has changed.

"The new Scottish Government takes this issue very seriously and, while lowering the limit is currently reserved, the Scottish Cabinet will be discussing in the near future how best to secure a change in the law."

Michael McDonnell, Director of Road Safety Scotland, said:

"Drivers need to realise that the risk of getting caught drink-driving is getting higher. But the consequences don't just start with being arrested as, for many, it will mean loss of job and income and that can have devastating effects on a family.

“What's more, you become an instant criminal with a record that lasts at least 20 years. The message is simple, it's not worth the risk, so ‘Don't risk it!’”

Dr. Bill Morrison, Consultant at the Accident and Emergency Department, Ninewells Hospital, said:

“It's always difficult to put this message across in a way which will get through to the public and make people aware of the tragic consequences of driving while intoxicated.

“We may not reach everyone but if this campaign makes some people think twice, changes the behaviour of a few, and saves just one life it will be worth it.”

RoSPA's Road Safety Manager in Scotland, Willie Wills, said:

"RoSPA welcomes the stance taken by ACPOS and the Scottish Government and fully supports the ongoing efforts to reduce the drink drive legal limit to 50mg combined with the introduction of random breath testing powers.

“At the launch of another festive season campaign aimed at improving road safety through deterring the irresponsibility of drinking and driving, it is felt that these changes would go a long way toward making it clear that any drinking and driving is unacceptable.

“RoSPA asks that people plan their festive activities in such a way that there is no need for them to drive after drinking. For friends and families, we ask that all concerned make it easy for drivers to say "NO!" to drinking alcohol.”

He added: "In an ideal world, we would reach the new year and the conclusion of this enforcement campaign with no one having been arrested for drink driving and no-one having been injured or killed by a driver who has taken alcohol.

“Regrettably, that is unlikely to be the case and it is almost certain that there is someone listening to these words now who will not be alive to hear the results of the campaign in the new year because they have been killed on our roads by a driver who has been drinking. The full tragedy of this is that - at this stage - it is completely preventable!”

ACPOS and Chief Constable Vine are fully supportive of a change in legislation that would lower the limit for motorists blood alcohol count from 80mg/100ml to 50mg/100ml. It has been a major tenet of the ACPOS “*Scottish Road Policing Strategy 2005 – 2008*” in reducing casualties due to drink or drug driving.

“Not only is the Scottish Government supportive of this move but even the British Medical Association is backing such a move,” he added.

“Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom are among a small group of European nations that have still not lowered the blood alcohol count (BAC),” said Chief Constable Vine.

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For further information on the launch and the campaign, contact:
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at 0141 435 1240 or 07771 842 881 out-of-hours.

Notes to the Editor:

- Any driver involved in a collision, even if caused by another driver, will be breath-tested. In addition, any driver stopped for committing a moving traffic offence can also be required to provide a breath sample.
- Legislation empowers the police to require suspected drug drivers to undertake roadside impairment tests in order to ascertain their fitness to drive. It is now an offence to refuse to take part.
- Crimestoppers anticipate calls from the public to their confidential number to double during the festive period when half of all Crimestoppers calls relate to drink or drug driving. The Crimestoppers free phone confidential number is 0800 555 111.
- Figures will be collated and released along with incidents of note on a weekly basis by ACPOS.