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Governor Schwarzenegger Joins Law Enforcement, MADD to Combat Drunk Driving with Special Holiday Season Effort

Commemorates Service of Peace Officers Killed by Drunk Drivers

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger joined today with law enforcement officials, Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) and family members of peace officers killed by drunk drivers to announce the launch of a special holiday season effort to prevent drunk driving and save lives.

"Driving under the influence is a serious problem, here and everywhere in California. Last year more than 1400 people were killed in alcohol-related crashes and more than 31,000 were injured in our state. This is unacceptable," said Governor Schwarzenegger. "That's why I am honored to join today with members of law enforcement, Mothers Against Drunk Driving and all concerned Californians, to begin a special effort to combat drunk driving. It's great to see the kick-off of this aggressive, coordinated campaign to get drunk drivers off the street."

Today's event, held in the Governor's Council Room in the State Capitol, highlighted the start of increased state and local law enforcement efforts statewide against drunk driving during the holiday season.

In his remarks the Governor also commemorated two recently fallen peace officers who were killed by drunk drivers: City of Rocklin Police Officer Matt Redding and California Highway Patrol Officer David Romero. Rocklin Police Chief Mark Siemens, representing local law enforcement to demonstrate the unified statewide enforcement effort, announced that the Rocklin Police Department's holiday season enforcement program would be named in Matt Redding's honor.

"We are all inspired that Rocklin's program will carry the name of one of California's finest -- Police Officer Matt Redding, who was struck down by a drunk driver in October. I hope that Officer Romero's and Officer Redding's service and sacrifice will inspire all of us to do our part to save others from danger, just as they did," said Governor Schwarzenegger.

Officer Redding's father, John Redding, spoke eloquently about Matt's personal crusade against drunk driving and his extraordinary dedication, which was recognized last year with a special award from Mothers Against Drunk Driving. MADD California executive director Paula Birdsong echoed the sentiments and thanked the Governor, the state and local law enforcement agencies for teaming up and working together to combat drunk driving, especially during the holiday season.

On Friday, California will begin the "maximum enforcement" period of its efforts against drunk driving, coordinated at the state level through the Statewide Traffic Action Response (STAR) program, a five-department initiative within the Business, Transportation and Housing Agency. The California Highway Patrol, Office of Traffic Safety, Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control, Department of Motor Vehicles and Department of Transportation each have specific responsibilities that contribute to the success of the state's anti-drunk driving effort.

California Highway Patrol Commissioner Mike Brown explained how state and local agencies are working together to crack down on drunk drivers and save lives during the holiday season. The stepped-up enforcement effort appears to be having a positive impact; Commissioner Brown noted that there were 63 fewer highway fatalities during the two-week holiday season last year, when the state's coordinated enforcement increase was first put into place, than during the same two-week period in 2003 -- a 25% decrease.

"As Governor, I will continue to support this effort with millions of dollars for more DUI checkpoints and patrols across California," said Governor Schwarzenegger. "We will work as a team -- state, counties, cities, law enforcement agencies, everyone -- to go after drunk drivers, and make the roads safer during the holiday season and throughout the year.

"I'd like to thank everyone for their help with this vital program and to wish all Californians a safe and happy holiday season."

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