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This Cinco de Mayo, Who's Your Sober Driver?

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Cinco de Mayo in the United States has become synonymous not only with tacos, sombreros, and piñatas, but also with margaritas, tequila, and beer. With alcohol such a big part of many people's Cinco de Mayo festivities, it's no surprise that drunk driving is especially high on May 5th. From 2008 to 2012, 233 people were killed in drunk driving crashes around Cinco de Mayo. In 2012, almost half (45%) of all traffic crash fatalities on Cinco de Mayo involved drunk driving. That tells us that people aren't planning ahead. To help stem the roadway carnage, the San Francisco Avoid DUI Task Force is joining with others across the state and nation to remind partygoers that drunk driving should never be part of your Cinco de Mayo plans.

A DUI / Sobriety Checkpoint will be setup in San Francisco on April 25th, from 8:00 P.M. to 4:00 A.M. Special DUI Saturations Patrols will be deployed next weekend on May 3rd, from 8:00 P.M. to 4:00 A.M. looking to identify and stop suspected drunk drivers. Additionally, every routine traffic and patrol officer assigned to duty will be on heightened alerted to prevent another senseless tragedy.

"Cinco de Mayo has unfortunately become one of the most dangerous days of the year, all because of drunk driving," said Sergeant John Bragagnolo, San Francisco Police Department. "Some people have this misconception that they can drink a little, and drive safely," he added, "but that's just not true. Everyone needs to remember that Buzzed Driving Is Drunk Driving, and there's never an excuse for it."

Every 51 minutes in 2012, someone was killed in a drunk driving crash in the United States, and 89 of those fatalities were around Cinco de Mayo. In fact, from 2011 to 2012, the number of people killed in drunk driving crashes on Cinco de Mayo more than doubled. In all fatal crashes in 2012, seventy-one percent of the drunk drivers involved had blood alcohol concentrations (BAC) of .15 or higher—almost twice the legal limit.

Here's the worst part: These drunk-driving deaths were 100-percent preventable. "We just want everyone to have a safe and happy Cinco de Mayo, by taking a few minutes ahead of time to get a plan together," Sergeant Bragagnolo, "No one ever plans to drive drunk, they just don't have a different plan, so they make a terrible decision."

Preventing drunk driving is as easy as uno, dos, tres:

1) Plan your ride ahead of time:

- Designate your sober driver before the fiesta begins; you might even consider paying for their food and non-alcoholic drinks; or

- Call a friend or taxi, or use public transportation; or
 - Use local sober ride program to get home.
- 2) Report Drunk Drivers! Call 9-1-1. You could save a life.
- 3) If you know people who are about to drive or ride while impaired, take their keys and help them make other arrangements to get to where they are going safely.

“It’s a real tragedy that 10,322 people were killed in drunk driving crashes in our nation in 2012,” said Sergeant Bragagnolo, “we’ve got to put a stop to it.” Many lives have been lost or shattered due to drunk driving. Death and injury are the worst consequences, but they aren’t the only ones. A DUI can cost you about \$10,000, and you could go to jail and lose your driver’s license.

This Cinco de Mayo, San Francisco’s Avoid DUI Task Force is cracking down on drunk driving, and those who are caught will be arrested. And think again – refusing a sobriety breath test won’t keep you out of trouble. Refusal can result in enhanced penalties, including immediate loss of your driver’s license.

Remember, drunk driving is never the answer, and there’s always another option. If you are going to drink at all on Cinco de Mayo, designate a sober driver, because Buzzed Driving Is Drunk Driving.

The Avoid DUI Task Force funding is provided by a grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety, through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. The next county wide DUI task force deployment will be for the Memorial Day Holiday Weekend, May 23rd - 26th.

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