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Drunken drivers could lose their freedom this holiday weekend

More than 300 law enforcement agencies to participate in crackdown through July 5

By Mary Beth Almond
C & G Staff Writer

METRO DETROIT — Last year, 317 Michigan motorists were killed in alcohol-related crashes, and 14 of them died over the Fourth of July weekend.

This year, 300 law enforcement agencies in 55 counties will have special patrols out on the roads looking for drunken drivers through July 5.

The sting is part of the “Drunk Driving. Over the Limit. Under Arrest.” The crackdown is funded by the Michigan Office of Highway and Safety Planning with federal traffic safety dollars.

“Based on what our crash data tells us ... crash fatalities increase during the summer months, and we also see a corresponding increase in fatalities that involve alcohol, so this is hopefully a preemptive strike on both those fronts,” said Anne Readett of the Michigan Office of Highway and Safety Planning.

Officers in Oakland, Macomb and Wayne counties will conduct increased drunken driving patrols in places where, Readett said, police hope they can make the biggest difference.

“We asked counties and law enforcement agencies within the counties to look at where their biggest problems are — in terms of crashes, fatalities and alcohol involvement. That’s typically where they will spend their time for the drunk driving crackdown,” she said.

Macomb County Sheriff Mark Hackel wanted to step up law enforcement over the holidays because he said he knew there will be a lot of people picnicking, partying and boating. He said extra patrols will also be out on the water policing.

“If we find (drunken drivers), we will take them to jail ... and if we find them on the water, then we can get to them before they get into a car,” Hackel said.

Oakland County Sheriff Mike Bouchard said he will send out extra patrols throughout the county to police drunken drivers as well as those not wearing their seatbelts as part of Click-It or Ticket.

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“We will have extra patrols out there to try to make sure that people have a great holiday weekend, but a safe one. We’d rather not write any tickets and not have any accidents, but sometimes a ticket or two will prevent an accident,” he said.

For a list of planned enforcement times, dates and locations, visit www.michigan.gov/ohsp.

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