

Press Release

25<sup>th</sup> November 2008

## **BIGGEST ANTI DRINK DRIVING AWARENESS CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED**

### **RSA, Gardaí, Commission for Taxi Regulation and MEAS Launch Christmas Anti Drink Driving Campaign**

Last year, 38 people lost their lives on Irish roads during the month of December, with 18 people killed or seriously injured over the Christmas period alone.

This tragic toll was highlighted at the launch, today Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> November, in Cork University Hospital, of the 2008 Christmas anti drink driving campaign from the Road Safety Authority (RSA) and An Garda Síochána.

This year's campaign also sees the RSA joining forces with the Commission for Taxi Regulation and MEAS to launch the biggest ever anti drink driving awareness campaign to date.

Consultants, surgeons and medical staff were among the attendees at the launch in Cork University Hospital to hear the details of the awareness campaigns. The first in association with the Commission for Taxi Regulation includes a new TV and Radio advert and is aimed at encouraging people to get home safely this festive season by using taxis or hackneys. The second campaign is in association with MEAS includes two Radio ads and highlights the danger of drink driving the morning after a nights socialising.

Speaking at the launch, Mr Gay Byrne, Chairman, RSA said: "The setting for this launch today is particularly appropriate. The consultants and staff of Cork University Hospital know only too well the devastation that drink driving causes to families across Ireland. So our message is simple – **Just One drink impairs driving**. Don't take that chance. Plan ahead. Leave the keys at home and get a taxi, minibus, public transport or take turns to designate a driver."

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Mr Noel Ahern, T.D., said, "This year will see the biggest anti drink driving awareness campaign to date. It follows the publication of recent statistics by the HSE on drink driving in Ireland which found that 1 in 3 crashes between 2003 and 2005 were alcohol related. Furthermore, where blood alcohol levels were available for killed drivers, almost 6 out of 10 (58%) had alcohol in their blood."

The event will also see the start of the Garda enforcement campaign to target drinking and driving over the Christmas and the New Year. At the launch, Assistant Commissioner, Eddie Rock, An Garda Síochána emphasised that enforcing drink driving legislation is a priority for the Gardai throughout the year.

Ms Kathleen Doyle, Commissioner for Taxi Regulation advised road-users to look for an alternative means of transport if they have been drinking: “Taxis, Hackneys and Limousines are unique in that they offer a round the clock service to the travelling public. They are an easy, safe and comfortable solution to getting home after a night out. Licensed vehicles are easy to recognise from their tamper-proof licence discs and driver IDs and many can be booked in advance. We are supporting the RSA campaign by saying never, ever drink and drive and reminding the public that there is an excellent service there for their use.”

The HSE study into drink driving in Ireland also found that 2 out of every 3 alcohol related crashes occur between 10pm on Friday night and 8am on Monday mornings. To remind road users that they may still be over the limit the morning after they have been drinking, MEAS will be running a radio advertising campaign in association with the RSA over the coming weeks. RSA/drinkaware.ie ‘Morning After’ campaign cards will also be distributed and a poster campaign will target pubs and clubs nationwide.

Speaking at the launch, Ms. Fionnuala Sheehan, Chief Executive of MEAS and drinkaware.ie called on people to take responsibility for their drinking this Christmas and not ignore the morning after.

“We have found that when drinking many people do not consider what a standard drink is and the period of time it takes their bodies to eliminate it. A standard drink measures the amount of alcohol, not the amount of liquid you’re drinking. When it comes to the morning after and getting into your car to drive, not knowing how much you have drunk is extremely dangerous as you may still have alcohol in your system”.

“This Christmas we are reminding people that a glass of stout / lager / cider, a small glass of wine or a pub measure of spirits is equal to one standard drink, and one standard drink takes on average one hour to leave your system. There are lots of myths out there about cures and soakage strategies. The only cure is time and when it comes to the morning after, remembering this will save lives”.

In addition to the activity with the Commission for Taxi Regulation and MEAS, the RSA will be reminding people of the danger and consequences of drink driving through the screening of its anti drink driving TV advert ‘Just One’. The drink driving awareness activity will be matched at local level by Road Safety Officers in local authorities nationwide.

To understand how alcohol affects the body visit the website [www.drinkaware.ie](http://www.drinkaware.ie) It has been developed by MEAS and has practical tips on getting home safely.

As of Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> November, there have been 259 deaths on our roads, a reduction of 33 on the same period in 2007.

**ENDS**

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**Editors Note:**

Supporting document attached - Drink Driving Statistics and Facts

## **Key Messages:**

1. Just one drink can affect your driving. This is not a theory this is scientific fact.
2. One in five (21%) fatal road crashes that happen between 6AM and 12 noon are alcohol related. (*Alcohol in Fatal Road Crashes in Ireland in 2003, HSE*).
3. Traditional ‘stomach liners’ or ‘cures’ wont speed up the process by which alcohol is eliminated from your system. Your body gets rid of roughly one standard drink per hour. That’s half a pint, or one glass of wine, or one shot - per hour. The only cure is **time**.
4. To understand how alcohol affects the body visit the website [www.drinkaware.ie](http://www.drinkaware.ie) It has been developed by MEAS and has practical tips on getting home safely.
5. This Christmas & New Year plan ahead if you are going out for a drink. Leave the keys at home get a taxi, minibus, public transport or take turns to designate a driver. Remember, you may also need to make plans the next morning.
6. An Garda Síochána are conducting over 30,000 breath tests each month. If you drink and drive there is now a good chance that you will be caught. If you are disqualified from driving, you will lose your licence for a minimum of one year.

## **Key Drink Driving Statistics**

A recent study of the years 2003 to 2005 by the HSE on drink driving Ireland found that in this three year period:

- 1 in 3 crashes were alcohol related
- Where BACs were available for killed drivers over half (58%) had alcohol in their blood
- In 1 in 4 crashes, the driver had consumed alcohol
- 1 in 4 pedestrian deaths related to their own alcohol intake
- The research confirms that weekends through to Monday continue to be the high risk period for alcohol related fatal crashes
- 1 in every 2 alcohol related crashes occur on Saturdays and Sundays
- 2 out of every 3 alcohol related crashes occur between 10pm on Friday night and 8am on Monday morning.

## **Drink Driving & The Law**

Tougher penalties for drink driving offences were introduced in March 2007. The changes include;

- The disqualification periods for drink driving offences ranges from 1 to 6 years depending on the level of alcohol detected, and whether it is a first or subsequent offence. This compares with the previous range of 3 months to 4 years.

- The offence of refusing to provide a sample of blood, urine or breath for evidential purposes now attracts an automatic disqualification of 4 years for a first offence and 6 years for a second or subsequent offence. Previously it was 2 and 4 years respectively.

The whole process for applying to have a licence restored following a disqualification has also been changed

- Only those who have not been disqualified in the preceding 10 years can apply for a reduction in their disqualification period. Furthermore, only those who have been disqualified for 2 years or more will be allowed to apply for the removal of a disqualification. Those with shorter disqualifications will have to serve them in full.

### **Drink Driving – Fast Facts:**

- 87% of the public say that drinking and driving is extremely shameful. In fact they say it is more shameful than speeding, shoplifting, adultery and tax evasion.
- The UK (.08) and Malta (.09) are the only other EU countries with the same of higher drink drive level compared to Ireland.
- All of the available evidence from research indicates that reducing the legal limit of BAC from the current limit of .08 to .05 will reduce the risk of being involved in a road traffic collision and consequently will save lives and prevent serious injuries.
- Ireland is among the highest alcohol consuming countries in the EU according to research published on November 1<sup>st</sup> 2007 by the Health Research Board.
- Any amount of alcohol impairs driving and increases risk – so the only safe advice is to NEVER EVER DRINK AND DRIVE.
- The aim of the Governments Road Safety Strategy 2007-2012, is to reduce collisions, deaths and injuries on Irish roads by 30%. This means 400 lives could be saved by the end of 2012.

### **Government Road Safety Strategy**

The RSA has recommended a reduction in the legal Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) for drivers from the current level of 80mg to 50mg and a reduction in the current limit to 20mg for learner and professional drivers. (Road Safety Strategy 2007-2012, Action Point 76).