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Memorial Weekend Program to Target Intoxicated Drivers and Boaters

Houston, Tx – The Anti-DWI “No Refusal” program will deploy to protect the public against intoxicated drivers and boaters over the extended Memorial Day holiday weekend, Harris County District Attorney Patricia Lykos announced Thursday.

“If you plan to be driving a motor vehicle or at the helm of a boat, we ask that you act sensibly and safely,” the District Attorney said. “We don’t tolerate DWI drivers or boaters, and the terrible tragedies that can result from that kind of irresponsible conduct.”

The No Refusal program begins Friday at 10 p.m. and continues through Monday. The Houston Police Department is a partner in No Refusal, and the program’s services are also available to other law enforcement agencies in the county. Blood samples can be legally drawn from suspected DWI drivers who refuse to submit to voluntary breath tests to determine intoxication levels.

Catherine Evans, Chief of the District Attorney’s Vehicular Crimes Section, noted that those arrested do not have a continuing option of intoxication test methods, once they refuse the initial request for breath testing.

“The process begins at that point for drawing your blood for testing,” she said. “If you have concerns or fears about needles, just know you’ll have one chance -- and one chance only -- to provide a breath sample first.” Registered nurses work in sanitary conditions to draw the blood.

The District Attorney’s Office conducted a 72-hour No Refusal Program during the Memorial Holiday weekend in 2009. That resulted in 247 DWI-related charges. Of those, 51 defendants had prior DWIs.

Evans reminded holiday weekend travelers that there are travel alternatives available – designated drivers, taxis or public transit -- for those who do not want to risk arrest.

“Plan to make the safe choices that can ensure you can enjoy the holiday safely,” she said. (end)

