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First of Four New DWI Processing Centers Unveiled
Another weapon added to combat drunk drivers
DA Lykos & HPD's Chief McClelland keep promise made earlier this year

Strengthening their aggressive and innovative fight against intoxicated-driving in Harris County, District Attorney Patricia Lykos and Houston Police Department Chief Charles McClelland on Wednesday announced the first of four additional intoxication-testing command centers is now active and operational within HPD's Midwest Patrol Station.

The DWI Testing Centers Project is vital to the comprehensive strategy to combat the scourge of intoxicated drivers in Harris County. The centers are located throughout the city in HPD Command Stations.

The value of the initiative includes several key benefits:

- **The proximity of the centers to the arrests is of immense importance.** The closer in time to an arrest that testing is performed, the better the evidence. Should the test result reveal intoxication, the offender is booked into the command center, which quickly puts officers back on patrol. Currently, officers are out of service two to three hours transporting and booking defendants into the County jail.
- **Provides digital video and audio recording of the tests and transmits them in real time to the Harris County District Attorney's Office.** Currently, it takes months to convert video tape to discs and transport to the DAO. The trial delay clogs court dockets and denies justice.
- **All law enforcement agencies benefit from this project.** Any law enforcement officer can take a suspected impaired driver to the centers for testing. The Department of Public Safety supervises the Intoxilyzers, thus facilitating a cooperative and integrated approach to maximizing resources. Reciprocally, HPD can take a suspect to Bellaire Police Department or Sheriff's Office as the closest location for testing.
- **There is no cost to taxpayers. Criminals are funding this project.** It was made possible by a \$525,148 grant from the HCDAO Asset Forfeiture Fund, which is comprised of illicit assets seized from criminals and forfeited through court proceedings.

There are two other strategic initiatives in this battle against intoxicated drivers who are a threat to the safety and lives of our citizens.

1. **No Refusal Weekends:** Many intoxicated drivers refuse to perform breath alcohol tests. The HCDAO obtained a grant from the Texas Department of Transportation to provide every weekend a team of dedicated officers, prosecutors and nurses to work around the clock. State law provides that search warrants may be obtained to draw blood from DWI suspects who refuse the breath test. This program prevents impaired drivers from evading evidence gathering.
2. **The Direct Intervention Project** (i.e., "DIVERT") provides for first offender DWI drivers who pass an intensive risk assessment and screening to be placed under strict supervision and treatment. The intent is to make people accountable and prevent repeat offenders-- participants pay all costs. The program began August 1, 2009, to date 2,799 defendants have successfully completed the program, of these only 1.53% have committed a new offense.

Lykos said, "Make no mistake, we are waging a war to end the carnage on our roadways. I salute Houston Police Chief McClelland and the Department for the swift implementation of this project, and especially for developing this initiative as a collaborative endeavor with other law enforcement agencies."

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