



**PATRICIA R. LYKOS**  
**DISTRICT ATTORNEY**  
**HARRIS COUNTY, TEXAS**

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Public Information Office  
Donna Hawkins  
George Flynn  
(713) 755-3320

**DA's Anti-DWI Program Expands for Travelers' Safety during Special Area Events**

Houston, Tx – The Harris County District Attorney's anti-DWI No Refusal Program will expand county-wide operations next week to help protect the higher volumes of travelers expected for a trio of popular area festivities – the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, and parties themed for St. Patrick's Day and Spring Break, District Attorney Patricia Lykos announced Friday.

No Refusal will be extended beyond the normal weekend deployments in conjunction with area law enforcement agencies that will be increasing DWI enforcement patrols.

This No Refusal expansion follows an especially deadly week on Harris County roadways. Seven crashes resulted in fatalities. Those led to charges of intoxication manslaughter in two of those crashes, and charges of Failure to Stop and Render Aid and DWI in a third crash.

January statistics for the No Refusal program reflect the increased cooperation with area law enforcement agencies. In that month, No Refusal set a record by obtaining search warrants for 20 separate agencies to have blood drawn and tested from suspected DWI drivers.

There were 401 arrests for first or second DWI offenses during January weekends of No Refusal operations. Of those, 134 involved No Refusal search warrants for blood testing.

Catherine Evans, Chief of the District Attorney's Vehicular Crimes Section, noted that the expansion of No Refusal coincides with the series of events that may involve drinking and driving. The University of Houston and other colleges have Spring Break recesses; the Houston Rodeo runs through March 20, and St. Patrick's Day is March 17.

"Our advice is always to enjoy these special festivities and celebrations," Evans said. "Just be sensible and make smart choices. Call for taxis or take public transportation, or use a designated driver. Don't drive drunk -- the consequences aren't worth it."

In overall January arrests, test results showed DWI drivers to be far above the .08 alcohol concentration level of presumed intoxication. Breath tests averaged .145 and blood tests averaged .161 for first offender DWIs. That ranged upward to the average of .183 for results on second offenders.

During the No Refusal Program, the Houston Police Department will also increase DWI enforcement units and use BAT vans that are mobile testing units for DWIs. Prosecutors in No Refusal obtained 61 testing warrants for HPD in January, followed by 20 warrants for the Harris County Sheriff's Office, and 11 for Pasadena Police.

Agencies that had eight or fewer warrants obtained in January include the Texas Department of Public Safety, and Harris County Constables' Offices in Precincts 8, 5, 4, 3 and 6.

Others were the Police Departments of Deer Park, Webster, Metro, Seabrook, Baytown, Tomball, La Porte, Friendswood, Humble, Jacinto City and Southside Place. (end)