

JIM LEITNER  
FIRST ASSISTANT



CRIMINAL JUSTICE CENTER  
1201 FRANKLIN, SUITE 600  
HOUSTON, TEXAS 77002-1901

**PATRICIA R. LYKOS**  
District Attorney  
Harris County, Texas

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Public Information Office  
(713) 755-3320

**AREA AGENCIES UNITE FOR A SAFER THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY**  
NEW INITIATIVE ANNOUNCED TO COMBAT IMPAIRED DRIVING

(Houston, Texas) – Harris County District Attorney Patricia Lykos, Houston Police Department Chief Charles A. McClelland, Harris County Sheriff Adrian Garcia and Department of Public Safety Regional Commander Duane Steen today announced a new initiative to reduce impaired driving-related traffic deaths and injuries over the Thanksgiving holidays.

“Harris County leads the nation in fatalities related to driving while under the influence of alcohol or drugs,” says District Attorney Lykos. “Impaired drivers cause carnage on our roadways and take innocent lives each year.”

To combat this threat, area law enforcement agencies have combined resources to timely and efficiently test drivers suspected of driving while intoxicated.

In October, the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) began supervising breath-testing services for county law enforcement agencies. This new system allows for a peace officer to use any instrument supervised by DPS. Thus, a deputy or a HPD officer may use the breathalyzer located at the Bellaire Police Department if that is closest to the traffic stop or accident location. Under the new initiative, Constable’s and Sheriff’s deputies may now utilize HPD machines.

Providing law enforcement agencies access to the nearest breath testing machine is a tremendous step forward.

In the near future, additional breath testing instruments will be placed throughout Houston and Harris County. They will be located at police substations, storefronts and outlying Harris County annexes. These locations will allow a peace officer to select a facility that is convenient to the traffic stop or accident location.

Plans are being developed to record the waiting period, instrument check, and breath-alcohol test.

Going forward, additional officers will be trained to become certified breath testing operators. With additional instruments, highly trained officers, and recorded encounters, law enforcement will have scientific evidence for the effective prosecution of impaired driving cases.

To serve and protect is the mandate of law enforcement.

Vital to this mission are plans for a major expansion of the extremely successful No Refusal program to 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and 365 days a year. Impaired drivers will be asked to give a specimen of their breath or blood. If the individual refuses, the refusal may be admissible in a subsequent prosecution. The officer may then apply for a warrant authorizing a blood draw. This is truly a no refusal, zero tolerance program.

"As part of my responsibility to ensure the safety of the motoring public, I concur with the District Attorney's plans to enhance our ability to remove impaired drivers from our roadways," says HPD Chief Charles McClelland. "These new initiatives will enhance public safety in the Houston and Harris County region." (END)