



State of New Mexico

Office of the Governor

Bill Richardson
Governor

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Governor Richardson Announces New DWI Initiatives Including Additional Officers, DWI Checkpoints

(Santa Fe, NM) Governor Bill Richardson today announced several new initiatives designed to reduce death and injury due to DWI in New Mexico.

“We must do all we can to reduce drunk driving in New Mexico, as quickly as possible,” Governor Bill Richardson said. “I look forward to reviewing the recommendations from the strike force I formed in the wake of the tragedy that took five lives from the Garcia and Collins-Gonzales families, and I will meet with the families tomorrow to personally express my condolences and hear their ideas. However, I am impatient when it comes to fighting DWI, and I believe getting started on these initiatives now will help us head off the next tragedy before it happens.”

These initiatives will be funded through existing state and federal National Highway Traffic Safety Administration funds. New initiatives announced today include:

- \$300,000 to Santa Fe County to support four full time DWI law enforcement officers devoted specifically to Santa Fe. Currently, the State partners with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to fund full time law enforcement activities for the five counties of McKinley, Dona Ana, Rio Arriba, San Juan and McKinley. Santa Fe County would become the sixth county to receive NHTSA funds for full time law enforcement officers and high visibility DWI efforts.
- \$750,000 to the New Mexico State Police for a variety of initiatives including increased DWI checkpoints and saturations patrols in the Counties of San Juan,

McKinley, Bernalillo, Santa Fe, Dona Ana, and Rio Arriba. The State Police will also increase manpower by 25% on the two days of the week that DWI crashes are the most frequent, and will have directed DWI patrols in areas where DWI fatalities are the worst in New Mexico. Enhanced activities will occur for the next 28 weeks.

- \$500,000 to the Albuquerque Police Department (APD) to develop a “Drunkbusters” unit to respond to citizen calls in Bernalillo County. APD will immediately begin working overtime to respond to calls while full time officers are hired.
- \$400,000 for court monitoring in the six county area including Santa Fe, Rio Arriba, San Juan, McKinley, Dona Ana and Bernalillo. Funds will be released on a Request for Proposals in order to hire court monitors to record the activities of the court and report any identified problems with under sentencing.
- \$400,000 for a workforce initiative that encourages employers to identify alcohol issues and to institute progressive zero tolerance policies regarding alcohol/DWI issues in the workplace.
- \$200,000 for public outreach. Two new Public Service Announcements (PSAs) on DWI will be released today and five new PSA’s will be released over the next several months to increase the participation of responsible citizens in reporting and reducing DWI. State officials are also developing new materials and signage for the Albuquerque Airport to encourage fellow travelers and airline personnel to report passengers who are intoxicated and who might drive upon leaving the airport.
- \$70,000 to replace existing Operation DWI signs with new signs that post the Drunkbusters number. Signs will be placed every 15 miles on the Interstates (I-10, I-25, and I-40) and one sign in each direction on US 285, Clines Corners to Carlsbad.
- Requesting that cell phone companies program the Drunkbusters number into the cell phones that they sell.
- Providing Metro Court with online access to the Motor Vehicle Division’s Registration Database to verify auto owner information. Currently, approximately 50% of Metro Court’s DWI convicted offenders duck ignition interlock requirements by signing affidavits stating that they do not own automobiles. Access to this database will help verify that all information provided to Metro Court is accurate.
- Installation of new solar powered raised pavement markers that will flash red when motorists are going the wrong way on an interstate ramp. Markers will be

piloted on interstate interchanges in the six counties where DWI is the deadliest -- Santa Fe, Rio Arriba, Dona Ana, Bernalillo, San Juan and McKinley.

Governor Richardson has already announced several initiatives meant to crack down on New Mexicans with out-of-state DWI convictions; prevent drunk drivers from accessing the wrong side of the highway; work with aviation officials to encourage the reporting of drunk passengers to local law enforcement; and increase enforcement of DWI laws.

Governor Richardson also appointed a Strike Force in November to examine possible new initiatives on DWI. The Strike Force will have its final meeting on December 13, 2006 at 1:00 pm and will vote on its proposals. The final report from the Strike Force is due to the Governor on December 22, 2006.

“I am committed to a full legislative agenda on DWI including further ignition interlock efforts, action concerning the Court of Appeals Day Case ruling, and mandatory blood testing for those involved in fatal crashes,” said Governor Richardson. “I expect to add to this agenda based on the Strike Force recommendations, but I see no reason not to move forward now where possible.”

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