



State of New Mexico

Office of the Governor

Bill Richardson
Governor

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Governor Richardson Announces Decrease in DWI Fatalities

ALBUQUERQUE - Governor Bill Richardson today announced a nearly 12-percent decline in the number of people killed in New Mexico due to drunk drivers. The preliminary figures for 2005 indicate 193 deaths in New Mexico resulting from DWI, compared to 219 in 2004.

“When I took office in 2003, I made the battle against DWI in New Mexico a top priority,” Richardson said. “Today, I am pleased to announce that all of our efforts are paying dividends – especially with the most gruesome DWI statistic: the number of people killed in New Mexico each year due to drunk drivers. While 193 are too many, it is a nearly 12-percent decline from the DWI death toll in 2004.”

New Mexico recently ranked worst in the nation in annual DWI fatalities, but in recent years, the state has improved to sixth worst, and, said Richardson, “We won’t rest until we eliminate drunk driving as a threat to New Mexicans.”

The preliminary DWI figures for 2005 also indicate a decrease in alcohol-related injury crashes and DWI crashes. Additionally, the preliminary numbers for alcohol fatalities per 100,000 population show a drop from 11.5 in 2004 to 10 in 2005, the lowest rate ever recorded in New Mexico.

The rate of alcohol fatalities per 100,000 population has shown the most dramatic decrease over the years. Back in 1979 the rate was 32.2, 31-percent higher than the current number. Governor Richardson noted, “Our state has made significant progress on

DWI and we will see to it that this progress continues. These numbers indicate that we are moving New Mexico forward in this important safety area.”

According to preliminary data released last week by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), overall alcohol-related fatalities increased 1.7 percent from 16,694 in 2004 to 16,972 in 2005 nationally. Georgia S. Chakiris, NHTSA Regional Administrator in Fort Worth, Texas, said, “It is welcome news that New Mexico's preliminary numbers for impaired driving related deaths are showing a downward trend at a time when the numbers are going up elsewhere.”

New Mexico DWI Czar Rachel O’Connor said “These bold actions have resulted in positive improvements in a number of areas related to DWI. We have shown that increased enforcement, education and public awareness are having an effect in the battle against drunk driving.”

Transportation Secretary Rhonda Faught added “We are encouraged by the progress we’re seeing in the efforts against DWI. The numbers released today show that we are making a difference and I look forward to seeing greater improvements in the future.”

The Governor pointed to bold actions undertaken during his administration on DWI, including requiring all DWI offenders to install ignition interlock devices in their vehicles; increasing the number of DWI Super Blitzez from five to eight; the Five Counties Program, which, thanks to assistance from NHTSA, specialized DWI officers have been hired in the five New Mexico counties where DWI has historically been the deadliest; and the statewide media campaign launched to educate and inform New Mexicans about the dangers and risks of driving while under the influence of alcohol.

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