



State of New Mexico

Office of the Governor

Bill Richardson
Governor

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Governor Bill Richardson Proposes Tougher DWI Initiatives In Response to Weekend Tragedy

Stricter Licensing, Highway Hazard Devices among Proposals

SANTA FE – Governor Bill Richardson today outlined several new anti-DWI 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.

“Despite all of the progress we have made to put a stop to drunk driving in New Mexico, the horrible tragedy that unnecessarily took the lives of a Las Vegas family is a reminder that we have more work to do,” Governor Bill Richardson said. “I am frustrated and angry, and I do not accept the attitude that we have done enough on DWI.”

Governor Richardson spoke today with family members, including the lone survivor of the accident, Arissa Garcia, and her grandfather, Ray Collins. The Governor expressed his condolences and agreed to meet with the family and work with them in the future.

In order to move quickly on the new DWI initiatives, Governor Richardson is creating a DWI Strike Force, led by Public Safety Secretary John Denko, which is charged with finding ways to implement and fund the new strategies and lobby the Legislature for changes in state law.

The Governor has also directed Secretary Denko to immediately contact officials with the federal Transportation Security Administration and find out the circumstances surrounding this weekend’s tragedy, including news reports that airport security was not notified about the possibility of a drunken passenger.

“I want to know why local law enforcement was not notified about a suspected drunk passenger who was flown to Albuquerque and was allowed to climb behind a wheel of a vehicle, threatening the safety of hundreds of drivers between the Sunport and Santa Fe,” Governor Richardson said. “I think the airlines share some responsibility to the citizens of all of their destination cities to be vigilant for drunken passengers.”

The Governor is directing the DWI Strike Force to focus on the following initiatives:

1. **Licensing** – The Motor Vehicle Division will require applicants from out of state who want a New Mexico drivers' license to provide a certified copy of their previous driving record. The applicant would be responsible for paying fees in other states to produce the driving record.
2. **Ignition Interlock** – Require people with prior DWI convictions in other states to follow New Mexico's ignition interlock law and, if they were convicted of DWI since the creation that law, they would be required to install interlock devices. Currently, a conviction from another state does not result in mandatory interlocks.
3. **Access to Highways** – Install hazard elimination devices, which may include spike belts that flatten tires and disable vehicles that attempt to access highways going the wrong way on off-ramps. The Strike Force would explore all options that prevent head-on accidents, starting with the most dangerous roads in the state.
4. **Aviation and Airports** – Encourage federal aviation agencies, including the federal Transportation Security Agency and the Federal Aviation Administration, to require airlines to report suspected drunken passengers to local law enforcement. The Strike Force will meet with federal aviation officials and airport law enforcement officials to develop a plan for screening arriving passengers who are suspected of being intoxicated and intend to drive a vehicle.
5. **Sharing of Information** – Explore ways to share information with other states and conduct cooperative investigations in cases in which a person is suspected of drinking before getting on a plane.
6. **Responsible Citizenship** – Develop a public-relations plan to educate New Mexicans, as well as anyone traveling through the state, about taking responsibility for reporting drunk drivers and potential drunk drivers to law enforcement. The state's Drunk Buster Hotline can be used as a tool to reach everyone who travels on New Mexico's roads and highways.

Governor Richardson's anti-DWI Strike Force will meet as soon as possible, and report back to the Governor with recommendations by Dec. 22, 2006. Members will include:

- Public Safety Secretary Denko
- House Speaker Ben Lujan or designee
- Senate President Ben Altamirano or designee
- Supreme Court Chief Justice Richard Bosson or designee
- State Police Chief Faron Segotta
- Public Safety Chief Counsel John Wheeler
- State DWI Czar Rachel O-Connor
- New Mexico MADD Executive Director Terry Huertaz
- Taxation & Revenue Secretary Jan Goodwin
- DMV Director Ken Ortiz
- Department of Transportation Secretary Rhonda Faught
- Traffic Safety Bureau Chief Mike Sandoval
- National Highway Traffic Safety Administration representative
- Federal Transportation Security Agency representative
- City of Albuquerque Aviation Department Police representative