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California Tackles the New DUI – Marijuana and Prescription Drugs

SACRAMENTO, CA - Every driver knows that alcohol-impaired, or "drunk", driving is dangerous and has steep consequences. Drunk driving killed 1,155 people on California roadways in 2014 alone. What individuals may not know, is that they can get a DUI, with all the same consequences, for driving under the influence of drugs, also known as a DUI-D. A new educational campaign from the California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS), "DUI Doesn't Just Mean Booze," is aiming to bring greater awareness of this growing problem.

"The use of prescription medications and marijuana is becoming increasingly more prevalent on our highways and creating new safety concerns," said OTS Director Rhonda Craft. "The Office of Traffic Safety wants to emphasize to California drivers that driving under the influence of drugs is a crime and a safety hazard on our roads."

According to The National Institute of Health and other studies, over the past 10-15 years, Americans have begun taking more prescription and over-the-counter medications that can impair driving. These drugs include sleep aids, pain killers, anti-depressants, stimulants, muscle relaxants, allergy medications, sedatives, and anti-anxiety drugs. These medications can affect judgment and driving performance for many hours after consumption. Just like drunk driving, driving under the influence of drugs is a crime, even if your impairment is due to prescribed medications, over-the-counter medications, or marijuana – medical or recreational.

California's Proposition 64, the Adult Use of Marijuana Act, went into effect November 9, making it legal for individuals 21 and older to use and grow marijuana for personal use. Multiple studies show that with increasingly larger doses of THC, the psychoactive component of marijuana, in the blood, drivers tend to weave in and out of lanes more, react slower to traffic lights and unexpected obstacles, and are less aware of their speed and surroundings in general.

Before driving:

- Always check the label of any medication and talk to your physician or pharmacist. Any mention of not driving, operating machinery, or side effects that causes brain or physical impairment needs to be taken seriously.
- Taking prescription medication according to doctor's orders is not an excuse for driving while impaired.

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- Combining alcohol with marijuana and/or prescription medications is even more dangerous than when used alone. The combination can affect coordination, distort perception, and make problem solving difficult, affecting your ability to drive safely.
- If you are not sure if you are impaired, just don't drive. Your life and those around you are depending on you.

All drivers are encouraged to download the Designated Driver VIP, or “DDVIP,” free mobile app for Android or iPhone. The DDVIP app helps find nearby bars and restaurants that feature free incentives for the designated sober driver, from free non-alcoholic drinks to free appetizers and more. The feature-packed app even has social media tie-ins and even a tab for the non-DD to call Uber, Lyft or Curb.

To view the new campaign commercial on marijuana, visit <https://youtu.be/laaz4LH3hfs>. For the new campaign commercial on prescription medications, visit <https://youtu.be/FiFnPN6ZjsQ>.

For more information and other traffic safety issues, visit www.ots.ca.gov. Follow us on Twitter at @OTS_CA or “Like” us at www.facebook.com/CaliforniaOTS and keep up with the latest traffic safety information.

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