

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
TUESDAY, November 21, 2023

CONTACT: Aaron Rummage
OFFICE: 615-741-7628

TENNESSEE LAUNCHES CAMPAIGN TO PROMOTE SAFE ALCOHOL USE DURING HOLIDAYS

Four Tennessee state departments are partnering to raise awareness of the dangers of excessive alcohol use, underage drinking, and drunk driving. The campaign will include a press conference, a joint social media campaign, and increased law enforcement operations. The joint social media campaign will provide education on safe alcohol practices and substance abuse treatment options.

NASHVILLE, TN –The Tennessee Departments of Health, Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, Safety & Homeland Security, and the Tennessee Alcoholic Beverage Commission (TABC) are partnering on a public health and safety campaign, “*DON'T LET ALCOHOL RUIN THE HOLIDAYS*,” to educate Tennesseans about the dangers of excessive alcohol use and promote safe alcohol practices.

The campaign will focus on the dangers of binge drinking, drunk driving, and underage alcohol consumption. The campaign will promote the Tennessee REDLINE, an addiction treatment referral service for individuals with substance abuse disorders. The campaign will also publicize two resources that citizens can use to report violations of state law. The first is the [TABC-compliant portal](#), where individuals can report alcohol law violations and violations occurring at state-licensed alcohol establishments. The second is dialing *THP to reach the TN Highway Patrol dispatch office to report reckless and drunk drivers. The TN Highway Patrol and the TABC will conduct additional operations this holiday season meant to significantly deter drunk driving, underage alcohol sales, and illegal sales to visibly intoxicated individuals.

November through January are peak months for alcohol consumption in Tennessee. From November 2022 to January 2023, Tennesseans consumed nearly 8.4 million combined gallons of distilled spirits, wine, and high-gravity beer, a 1.65-million-gallon increase from Feb-April 2022, the lowest three-month period of 2022.

"Alcohol sales at bars and restaurants are high during the Thanksgiving holidays and even more substantial for retail liquor stores during Christmas and New Year holidays. It's essential to ensure alcohol is served and consumed responsibly," said Russell Thomas, Executive Director of the TABC. "Our staff will be working overtime during these holidays to monitor activities at state licensees."

Alcohol remains the most commonly abused substance in Tennessee. Alcohol misuse contributes to more than 200 health conditions and more than 70,000 alcohol-related ER visits in Tennessee in 2022.

"Binge drinking poses significant health risks," Tennessee Health Commissioner Ralph Alvarado, MD, FACP said. "Its consequences extend beyond individual well-being, affecting families, communities, and our healthcare system at large. Excessive alcohol intake places a strain on emergency services and contributes to many preventable health issues, including liver disease, cardiovascular complications, and mental health challenges."

Because the holidays are a peak time for road travelers, drunk driving during the holidays is a major concern for public safety officials. AAA estimates that nearly 49.1 million Americans will travel using our nation's roadways this Thanksgiving.

Lt. Colonel Jimmie Johnson of the Tennessee Highway Patrol said, "With so many families on the road this holiday season, we must ensure our roads are safe from drunk drivers. Driving drunk puts everyone at risk, and we will aggressively enforce the state's DUI laws."

A primary goal of this campaign is to reduce the stigma associated with seeking treatment for alcohol and drug addiction. Stigma serves as a barrier to treatment, keeping a person in a potentially life-threatening situation. Anyone seeking information on treatment options is encouraged to use the [Tennessee REDLINE](#), a 24/7/365 resource for substance abuse treatment referrals, or talk to their healthcare provider. Anyone can call or text 800-889-9789 for confidential referrals.

"If you're struggling with your alcohol use, please know that you're not alone. There is great strength in asking for help, and the good news is help is available whether you can pay for it or not. Countless Tennesseans in all walks of life are on a new road of recovery from alcohol use disorder," said TDMHSAS Commissioner Marie Williams, LCSW.

The campaign will run throughout the holiday season, beginning on November 14th and ending in late December.

For more information about each of the participating departments, please visit:

Tennessee Department of Health- www.tn.gov/health.html

Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services- www.tn.gov/behavioral-health.html

Tennessee Department of Safety, and Homeland Security- www.tn.gov/safety.html

Tennessee Alcoholic Beverage Commission- www.tn.gov/abc.html

###