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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Ignition interlocks top this year's list of most unwanted gadgets *Statewide drunk driving crackdown is Dec. 16 – Jan. 2*

Unless they want to find one of this year's most unwanted electronic gadgets under the tree, motorists need to designate a sober driver this holiday season as law enforcement officers across the state are taking part in a drunk driving crackdown Dec. 16 – Jan. 2. Those that choose to drive drunk could find themselves the recipient of an ignition interlock to start off the new year.

More than 200 law enforcement agencies in 35 counties are conducting drunk driving enforcement during extra patrols funded by the Office of Highway Safety Planning (OHSP) through federal traffic safety funds.

In Michigan, it is illegal to drive with a blood alcohol content (BAC) of .08 or higher, although motorists can be arrested at any BAC level if an officer feels they exhibit signs of impairment while driving. As of Oct. 31, under the new high BAC law motorists face enhanced penalties if arrested with a .17 BAC or higher.

"The holidays are a time for family and friends to gather and celebrate," said Michael L. Prince, OHSP director. "Help keep this festive season safe by not drinking and driving or planning ahead by designating a sober driver."

In 2009, there were 299 alcohol-related traffic deaths, a decrease of 5.7 percent from 2008. Although the number of alcohol-related traffic deaths declined last year, crashes involving alcohol are eight times more likely to be fatal.

During last year's Christmas and New Year's holiday periods, 10 people died in traffic crashes. Four of those deaths were alcohol-related.

A motorist convicted of drunk driving can expect to face serious consequences including:

- Up to 93 days in jail
- Up to a \$500 fine
- Up to 360 hours of community service
- 180 days driving suspension
- Six points on a driver's license

If convicted under Michigan's new high BAC law, in addition to points on their driver's license and community service, enhanced penalties for first-time drivers include:

- Up to 180 days in jail
- Up to a \$700 fine
- One year license suspension with restrictions permitted after 45 days
- One year mandatory alcohol treatment program or self-help program

Motorists who wish to have limited driving privileges following a 45-day license suspension may do so only after a breath alcohol ignition interlock device is installed on their vehicle. Installation and monthly fees are the responsibility of the driver.

An ignition interlock requires a driver to blow into the device and prevents a vehicle from starting if it measures a BAC of .025 or above. In addition, the device requires periodic retests when driving longer periods. The device records the date and time of each test and any violation is reported to the Department of State.

In addition, all convicted drunk drivers are subject to a \$1,000 fee for two consecutive years, for a total of \$2,000 in additional costs. Anyone who refuses a breath test the first time is given an automatic one-year driver's license suspension.

For a listing of planned enforcement times, dates, and locations, visit www.michigan.gov/ohsp.

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