



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Operation Thunder returns to Savannah area this weekend**

*State and local law enforcement officers will be focusing on drunk and distracted drivers during three-day operation*

**(SAVANNAH)** - The Port Wentworth Police Department, Pooler Police Department, Georgia State Patrol, and H.E.A.T. units from the Governor's Office of Highway Safety remind everyone to don't press their luck by drinking and driving during St. Patrick's Day weekend in the Savannah-Chatham County area.

That is because "Operation Thunder" will return to the area for a second straight year with local and state law enforcement officers looking to take drunk and drugged drivers off of area roads during the three-day operation.

"We know hundreds of thousands of people are coming to Savannah for the annual St. Patrick's Day festivities and we want everyone to have a great time" Governor's Office of Highway Safety Law Enforcement Services Director Roger Hayes said. "Unfortunately, some people want to spoil the party by endangering the lives of others when they get behind the wheel of a vehicle when they have had too much to drink. Our message is very clear and this is your warning. If you make the decision to drink and drive, law enforcement officers will be out this weekend ready take you to jail."

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 59 people were killed in drunk driving crashes in the United States over a 48-hour period during the 2017 St. Patrick's Day weekend.

According to preliminary data from the Georgia Department of Transportation, there were 12 people killed in crashes in the state, including two in Chatham County, during last year's St. Patrick's Day weekend. Drunk driving was cited as a factor in 119 of the 3,137 traffic crashes that took place in Georgia during the 2018 St. Patrick's Day weekend that began Friday, March 16 and ended on Sunday, March 18.

State and local law enforcement officers made 36 D.U.I. arrests during the 2018 Operation Thunder in Port Wentworth and the Georgia State Patrol made 196 D.U.I. arrests statewide in a span of just over 48 hours.

The Port Wentworth "Operation Thunder" will begin on Thursday, March 14 with local law enforcement and Georgia State Patrol units conducting traffic enforcement for speeding, distracted driving, no seat belts, and other violations.

GOHS H.E.A.T. units from around the state will join these officers for road checks on major roads around the Savannah area on Friday and Saturday. People driving in the area should have their attention on the road and be ready to stop when they drive up on a road check.

"There is going to be a lot to do and see in Savannah this weekend, but the one place we don't want people to see is the inside of a jail cell," Hayes said. "But that is where you will find yourself if you are arrested for drinking and driving. Having a plan for a sober ride from the party before it begins means you can spend your time enjoying your celebration with your friends and family without any worries."

The Governor's Office of Highway Safety also offers these options and safety reminders:

- Schedule a ride with a rideshare service or cab company before leaving for your party.
- Download NHTSA's free SaferRide app, available on Apple and Android devices, which can connect you to a local cab company or friend to pick you up
- Call AAA Tow-2-Go at (855) 286-9246 for a free ride/tow up to 10 miles from March 15 through 6:00 a.m. on March 18. (More info at [https://autoclubsouth.aaa.com/safety/tow\\_to\\_go.aspx](https://autoclubsouth.aaa.com/safety/tow_to_go.aspx).)
- Let friends and family know you will come pick them up if needed
- Offer to drive if you know someone is too impaired to get behind the wheel and you are sober to drive
- Reward designated drivers with free non-alcoholic beverages

For more information on GOHS' impaired driving awareness programs, visit <https://www.gahighwaysafety.org>. Follow GOHS on social media at [www.facebook.com/gahighwayafety](https://www.facebook.com/gahighwayafety), @gohsgeorgia on Twitter and Instagram or GOHSGEORGIA on YouTube.