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NEW MEXICO FIRST STATE TO EARN SPECIAL ANTI-DRUNK DRIVING GRANT

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) announced today that New Mexico is the first state to qualify for a special anti-drunk driving grant which could bring \$627,621 to the state annually for three years.

According to NHTSA Administrator Jerry Ralph Curry, New Mexico earned a basic grant of \$193,114 by requiring the swift administrative suspension of drivers' licenses for driving under the influence of alcohol or other drugs, and by creating self-sustaining, community programs to reduce drunk driving.

Curry said, "New Mexico reduced the time between arrest and final license suspension to 30 days, qualifying the state for a grant equal to 20 percent of its annual federal highway safety funding. Completing suspensions within 15 days could increase the basic grant to 30 percent."

The state earned another \$434,507 in annual grants by requiring chemical tests for drivers involved in serious crashes when police suspect alcohol involvement; providing an effective means of preventing drivers under age 21 from obtaining alcoholic beverages; and prohibiting alcohol consumption or even possession of an open container of alcohol in a motor vehicle.

Curry said, "These special funds have been available since Nov. 18, 1988, but no state could meet the criteria until now. New Mexico has made important progress in battling the drunk driving problem over the last decade, and these new funds should assist in bringing even more improvement."

Deaths in alcohol-related crashes in New Mexico dropped from 417 in 1980 to 305 last year. The proportion of alcohol-related deaths also declined, from 66.9 percent of all crash deaths 10 years ago, to 63.4 percent in 1990.

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