



U.S. Department of
Transportation

News:

Office of Public Affairs
Washington, D.C. 20590

Contact: Mari Maseng
Tel.: (202) 426-4570

REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION
ELIZABETH HANFORD DOLE
NATIONAL DRUNK AND DRUGGED DRIVING AWARENESS WEEK CEREMONIES
THE WHITE HOUSE
DECEMBER 13, 1983

I am very grateful for the solid core of commitment and dedication on the part of all the organizations represented in this room. Together we have made a significant impact on public opinion, and real progress in our efforts to reduce drunk driving.

I especially want to thank Chairman John Volpe and the 32 members of the President's Commission for the superb job they have done in focusing public attention on the extent of the drunk driving problem.

- The Commission has completed its work and submitted its recommendations. The members deserve our gratitude for the great deal of time and effort spent, and for the innovative and thoughtful recommendations submitted.
- Even though the term of the Presidential Commission has expired, I am pleased that the interest and momentum it generated will be sustained. As you know, the work will continue under the auspices of a new National Commission on Drunk Driving, to be funded entirely by the private sector.
- This is a tribute to the concern we all share for the unacceptably high costs of drunk driving in our society. That concern extends from the halls of Congress and the Oval Office itself, to state legislatures and town councils, and into the homes all across America where loved ones have been lost to drunk drivers.
- Our commitment is a continuing one -- and while we here observe National Drunk and Drugged Driving Awareness Week, we know that our resolve must extend not just for a week, or a year, but until the menace of the alcohol or drug-impaired driver has been removed from our highways.

-more-

We all know someone -- a member of the family, a friend, a neighbor, perhaps -- who has felt the pain and frustration from the loss of a loved one in an alcohol-related crash.

- A nine year-old girl was killed just a few weeks ago, in a Washington suburb, by a hit-and-run driver with a long record of drunk driving arrests. The little girl was on her way home from the toy store where she had been picking out Christmas presents.
- In Indiana, a young man was killed while jogging. In Texas, an infant not yet a year old died when a car driven by a drunk driver crashed into his home, smashing his crib. In Maryland, a father of two was killed instantly when his car was hit head-on by a drunk driver -- who didn't even have a license.

These reports, and hundreds of others like them, remind us that we can have no greater transportation priority than highway safety. You agree, I'm sure, or you wouldn't be here today -- and you wouldn't have been "out there" all this past year, actively working in the cause of greater safety.

That's why I want to challenge each of you -- and business leaders throughout our country -- to make a new years' resolution. Resolve to do what you can, to make driving safer in 1984.

- As company executives, you can influence greater safety belt usage by your employees. The safety belts already in our cars are the best and cheapest insurance against the drunk driver.
- I carried out a safety belt incentive program at the Department of Transportation that raised the usage rate among our employees from 23 percent at the start of the program to over 60 percent just a few months later.
- This approach has worked well in a number of companies and is one of the most effective actions we can take to get more motorists into the safety belt habit.
- Communities are also experimenting with incentive campaigns to promote seat belt use.
- I am confident that if we really worked at it -- as business executives, employers, community leaders -- we could reduce the death and suffering caused by drunk drivers this holiday season. I urge you to enlist others in this cause.

I wish I had time today to recognize all the individuals, or even all the groups -- public and private -- who have already joined in this effort. From the members of Congress who served on the President's Commission and the many others who supported legislation setting aside this special week; to the many associations who have given their support: you have proven again that there is strength in numbers, and the power to prevail when we are united in a common cause.

I wish, too, that our time permitted me to highlight all the activities being held or planned for this week. Like MADD with its nationwide candlelight vigil... RID with its "lights for Life" motorcades... the National Association of Women Highway Safety Leaders' Christmas cards bearing the message "We want you alive after the holidays. Please drink and drive responsibly,"... and leaders in the insurance industry with their awareness activities for employees and policyholders.

* Now, I would like Bill Turnbull, president of the National Automobile Dealers Association, to tell us briefly what his organization -- representing one segment of the private sector -- is doing to combat drunk driving.

-###-