## PoliceLight-onBlueBarAUGUST/LABOR DAY CRACKDOWN

**LAW ENFORCEMENT PLANNER**

# SAMPLE Op-Ed

***The Tragedy of Drunk Driving***

As long as I’ve been a police officer, I’ve never gotten used to the sorrow I feel when I’m called to the scene of a crash where a young person has died due to alcohol-impaired driving. These accidents happen far too often: In 2009, alcohol-impaired-driving fatalities accounted for 32 percent of the total motor vehicle traffic fatalities in the United States. That means an average of one alcohol-impaired-driving fatality happened every 48 minutes. This senseless loss of human life is a daily reality all over America, year after year.

Imagine the public outrage if 30 jumbo jets — each carrying about 400 people — crashed every year in America, killing everyone on board. That’s the equivalent to the toll our country suffers annually due to alcohol-impaired driving. Among drivers involved in motor vehicle traffic crashes, 21- to 24-year-olds had the highest percentage of drivers with blood alcohol concentrations of .08 or higher. Where’s the indignation over this catastrophe?

The fact is that alcohol impaired-driving deaths *did* decline dramatically during the 1980s and early 1990s. Social activism, including the rise of organizations such as MADD, led to tighter laws that helped bring the death toll down. During that period, every state — plus Washington, D.C. — made it illegal to drive with a BAC of .08 grams per deciliter or above. In addition, the legal drinking age was raised from 18 to 21. Today, high-profile enforcement campaigns such as **[New Tagline]** continue to help reduce the number of alcohol-impaired-driving crashes.

Although data shows that alcohol-impaired-driving fatalities across the country have declined by almost 8 percent in the last year, the numbers are still too high. In 2009 alone, the latest year for which we have data, nearly 12,000 people died in crashes in which a driver or motorcycle rider was at or over the legal limit, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

Because we’re committed to ending this tragedy, our police department **[or if not a police department, insert your law enforcement agency here]** will join with others across the country during the upcoming Labor Day holiday weekend for an intensive crackdown on alcohol-impaired-driving. In 2009, alcohol-impaired-driving fatalities accounted for 38 percent of all motor fatalities throughout the Labor Day holiday. This nationwide enforcement campaign is aimed at the most likely offenders, 21- to 34-year-old males, and runs from August 19 through September 5.

As police officers, our message during this crackdown — and the rest of the year too — is clear and unwavering: ***[New Tagline]****.* With stepped-up law enforcement throughout the nation — including sobriety checkpoints and saturation patrols — if we catch you driving drunk, you will face serious consequences.

For more information, visit the High-Visibility Enforcement Campaign Headquarters at www.StopImpairedDriving.org.

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