



## **STRONGER DRUNK DRIVING LAW BEGINS JULY 1<sup>ST</sup>**

*Local safety advocates join together to kick off safer roads this holiday.*

VIRGINIA BEACH, VA. (June 29, 2012) AAA Tidewater Virginia, Virginia Beach Delegate Sal Iaquinto, and Virginia's Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) joined forces today with Virginia State Police and local law enforcement to get the message out about important changes that will make Virginia's Driving Under the Influence (DUI) law stronger.

Starting July 1<sup>st</sup>, any driver who is convicted of Driving Under the Influence (DUI) will be required to have an ignition interlock device installed in their vehicle for six months, at the driver's expense. One standard DUI conviction is all it takes, even if it's the first and only drunk driving offense that person has ever had.

At a news conference held at the Virginia Beach Town Center, traffic safety advocates, local law enforcement officials, and Commonwealth Attorneys from Norfolk and Virginia Beach joined MADD, AAA, Delegate Sal Iaquinto and the Virginia State Police (VSP) to support of the new law. With the help of the VCP/MADD DUI Simulator, participants were given a hands-on experience of the potential debilitating effect on driving skills at the .08 BAC level. Draeger, one of the four companies in Virginia authorized to sell the devices, supplied a vehicle equipped with ignition interlock for the event.

"Moving Virginia to include ignition interlock as a requirement for a restricted license will go far in the fight to decrease drunk driving in the Commonwealth," stated Georjeane Blumling, spokesperson for AAA Tidewater Virginia, "It is important, with the July 4<sup>th</sup> holiday approaching, to let drivers know there is no longer a pass for first time convictions of a DUI in Virginia. As an advocate for the safety of motorists, AAA believes that the new law is a huge step forward in the fight against drunk driving and further strengthens the message of intolerance to those who chose to drink and drive in Virginia."

MADD, who played a major role in the six year fight for the passage of the law, today launched a public awareness campaign called "DON'T BLOW IT" to educate motorists about the new law. The campaign can be found at [www.dontblowitva.com](http://www.dontblowitva.com). The kick off was especially timely as July 4<sup>th</sup> celebrations where family and friends gather for picnics and to toast our nations independence could have tragic consequences if partiers are not responsible. The group hopes that the law will make those who might otherwise consider driving impaired by alcohol think again, due to the fear of losing their independence or suffering the embarrassment of having an ignition interlock on their car for six months.

"The ignition interlock is a tool that will help save lives in Virginia," said Chris Korschak, Manager at MADD Virginia. "No family should have to hear the news that a loved one was killed or injured by a drunk driver. The ignition interlock prevents drunk driving by people who have demonstrated they are willing to break the law by driving impaired."

Drunk drivers kill or injure innocent victims and sometimes themselves in close to **16 crashes per day** in Virginia. In 2011, 245 people were killed in alcohol related crashes and another 5,465 were injured. Ignition interlocks have been attributed to dramatically reducing the drunk driving fatality statistics in states that have mandatory ignition interlock laws for convicted DUI offenders. Supporters of the

greater use of ignition interlock devices believe that many lives can be saved by simply preventing impaired motorists from driving.

Delegate Salvatore R. Iaquinto, a Republican from Virginia Beach, and Senator A. Donald McEachin, a Democrat from Richmond, introduced this legislation that finally, after a six year battle, becomes law on Sunday. "We need to do everything we can to ensure that we keep drunk drivers off our roads" stated Delegate Iaquinto.

With the requirement of the ignition interlock for first time DUI offenders, Virginia has some of the toughest DUI laws in the nation. So why run the risk of endangering yourself and others? Don't make the mistake of drinking and driving. Troopers will be out this 4<sup>th</sup> of July holiday looking for impaired drivers and there will be no warnings and no excuses. If you drive impaired, you will be arrested.

#### Ignition Interlock Stats:

- According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), ignition interlock devices reduce drunk driving recidivism by 67 percent.
- An overwhelming 80 percent of those using ignition interlocks say that the devices are successful or very successful in preventing them from drinking and driving.
- An interlock is more effective than license suspension alone as 50 to 75 percent of convicted drunk drivers continue to drive on a suspended license. (*Peck, et al, 1995 and Beck et al, 1999*)
- Ignition interlocks for convicted drunk drivers can save taxpayers money, as the DUI offender pays for the installation and monitoring of the interlock.
- Similar measures have proven to be effective in other states. As a result of laws requiring interlocks for all convicted drunk drivers in Oregon and Arizona, DUI related deaths are down by 52 and 51 percent, respectively. (NHTSA-FARS Query).
- Conservative estimates show DUI offenders have driven drunk at least 80 times before they are arrested. (CDC "Vital Signs: Alcohol-Impaired Driving Among Adults — United States, 2010.")
- **Public Supports Interlocks for First-Time Convicted Drunk Drivers.**
  - **88 percent support** interlocks for all convicted drunk drivers. (*Center for Excellence in Rural Safety at the University of Minnesota, May 2010*)
  - **84 percent support** ignition interlocks for convicted drunk drivers. (*Insurance Institute for Highway Safety 2009 Survey*)
  - **Over 3 of 4 persons support** requiring interlocks for first-time convicted drunk drivers. (AAA 2011 Survey: <http://www.aaafoundation.org/pdf/2011TSCIndex.pdf>)

*As part of North America's largest motoring and leisure travel organization, AAA Tidewater Virginia provides its more than 325,000 members with travel, insurance, financial and automotive-related services. Since its founding AAA Tidewater Virginia has been a leader and advocate for the safety and security of all travelers. For more information, visit [AAA.com](http://AAA.com) and follow us on Twitter at [Twitter.com/AAATWnews](https://twitter.com/AAATWnews).*

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