

'Tis the season to be cautious while driving

■ The holiday season means more traffic, more parties and more drunk driving, and that can make the road dangerous

By Lindsay Buchele
Oregon Daily Emerald

The holiday season can be a dangerous time to drive, especially when there is a threat of drunk drivers on local roads and highways.

Local statistics from the past two years show that the number of Driving Under the Influence arrests in December through January increased slightly.

Statewide statistics show a slightly larger increase during that time than the local statistics do, but it is still low, law enforcement officers say.

Oregon State Police Lt. Glenn Chastain said the rise in the number of arrests statewide is likely due to the increased number of patrolers.

With more officers on the roads, more arrests will be made, he said.

Jan Power, spokeswoman for the Eugene Police Department, said a significant amount of partying and alcohol consumption occur during the holiday season; therefore, drunk driving is still a big threat.

"We know there's going to be an increased amount of traffic out on the roads and more parties taking place during the holidays," Power said. "These factors can contribute to a higher number of drunk driving incidents."

The Oregon State Police have money specifically set aside to increase the number of patrolling officers during December.

"When we tell people there are increased patrols, it makes people more aware, and they tend to drive much safer," Oregon State Police patrol sergeant Scott Miller said.

Power said that although the EPD doesn't have more patrols during the holidays, officers will still catch

drunk drivers.

EPD patrol officer Chris Kilcullen has been patrolling the Eugene streets for four months. In that time, he has issued 11 DUI citations. He said he expects the number of drunk drivers to increase during the holidays, something he wishes wouldn't happen.

"The drunk driver is never the one to get hurt in an accident," Kilcullen said. "It's the family driving to grandma's for a visit who will be the victims."

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