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Plan ahead for a sober ride home. That's the message that the Texas Department of Transportation and law enforcement agencies statewide are stressing this holiday season.

The campaign is called Holiday P.A.S.S. (Person Appointed to Stay Sober). TxDOT says too often a designated driver is chosen during the evening and is the "least drunk" person in the group. The goal of P.A.S.S. is to get people to plan ahead and remember that "sober drivers make great gifts."

The number of DWI-alcohol fatalities in Texas during the 2012 holiday season (Dec. 1, 2012-Jan. 1, 2013) numbered 78. That was up 21.8 percent from the 64 alcohol-related fatalities recorded Dec. 1, 2011-Jan. 1, 2012.

During that Dec. 1, 2012-Jan. 1, 2013 timeframe the Burleson Police Department reported five crashes where alcohol was a contributing factor. No injuries or fatalities were reported in those five crashes last year.

Between Nov. 20 and Dec. 15, 2013, Burleson Police officers arrested five people for driving while intoxicated. Three of the five were women. In one case, the man's blood alcohol content was more than 0.15. The legal limit in Texas is .08. It was a second DWI arrest for a woman arrested on Nov. 24. And, on Nov. 26 a woman who was arrested for DWI had an open container of alcohol.

During the upcoming holiday season, law enforcement officers throughout the state, including Burleson, will work to crack down on drunk driving.

"We will be stepping up enforcement efforts to keep intoxicated drivers off the road and keep the public safe," Burleson Deputy Police Chief Chris Havens said. "We encourage the public to not drink and drive and to arrange to have a designated driver before going out. We also encourage the public to report an intoxicated person before that individual leaves the business or the party and gets behind the wheel."

The Burleson Police Department has operated with the no-refusal policy since May 2008. If a driver suspected of driving while intoxicated in Burleson refuses to submit to an intoxilyzer test, that driver will have a police escort to the hospital to have blood drawn. Previously, Burleson requested search warrants for DWI

breath test refusals when the suspected driver had a previous conviction for DWI or was involved in a traffic accident while allegedly driving while intoxicated. The department's current policy allows officers to seek warrants for every DWI breath test refusal.

In Texas, a person is legally intoxicated and may be arrested and charged with DWI with a .08 BAC (blood or breath alcohol concentration). However, a person is also intoxicated if impaired due to alcohol or other drugs regardless of BAC.

Whether you're the driver or the passenger, you can be fined up to \$500 for having an open alcohol container in a vehicle.

You can be charged with child endangerment for driving while intoxicated if you're carrying passengers younger than 15 years old. DWI with a child passenger is punishable by a fine of up to \$10,000, up to two years in a state jail and loss of your driver's license for 180 days.

If it is your first DWI offense, you could face a fine of up to \$2,000, three days to 180 days in jail, loss of your driver's license for up to a year, and an annual fee of \$1,000 or \$2,000 for three years to retain your driver's license.

A second DWI offense can include a fine of up to \$4,000, one month to a year in jail, loss of your driver's license for up to two years and an annual fee of \$1,000, \$1,500 or \$2,000 for three years to retain your driver's license.

If it is your third DWI offense, you could face a \$10,000 fine, two to 10 years in prison, loss of your driver's license for up to two years and an annual fee of \$1,000, \$1,500, or \$2,000 for three years to retain driver license

After two or more DWI convictions in five years, you must install a special ignition switch that prevents your vehicle from being operated if you've been drinking.

For information about the consequences of underage drinking and driving, go to the Texas Department of Transportation website at <http://tinyurl.com/l3f3u4s>.