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ALEA Launches Third Annual ‘Think Smart Before You Start Spring Break’ Campaign

Focusing on the Dangers of Opioids and Impaired Driving

MONTGOMERY – March 20, marks the first official day of spring, meaning vacation and spring break travel plans are on the rise. While the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency (ALEA) will continue to focus on dangerous driving behaviors such as speeding, following too closely and distracted driving, a top priority this year is impaired driving and the dangers of opioids.

“Tuesday night, Governor Kay Ivey announced during the annual State of the State Address that she has tasked ALEA with combatting dangerous opioids such as Fentanyl, through the State’s Drug Task Force,” said ALEA Secretary Hal Taylor. “The opioid crisis is a growing issue across the nation, and it affects our communities, schools and our loved ones. I would like to reassure the citizens of Alabama that this a top priority of ALEA and we will continue to viciously combat the opioid epidemic through all areas of law enforcement to preserve public safety. This includes targeted enforcement initiatives reducing both drug trafficking as well as impaired driving, in conjunction with educational campaigns and community outreach programs.”

Troopers along with Special Agents within ALEA’s State Bureau of Investigation (SBI) regularly partner with local schools and other organizations such as Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), the Alabama Farmers Federation (ALFA) and the Alabama Alcoholic Beverage and Control (ABC) Board to conduct educational events across the state including the Fatal Vision Program, Operation Save Teens and ABC’s Underage, Under Arrest Program. All three programs provide insight to the dangers of driving while impaired and the consequences of consuming alcohol and drugs. SBI utilizes goggles within its Fatal Vision program which simulate the effects of two different types of impairment, one which simulates the impairment of drugs and the other alcohol. Since the beginning of the current fiscal year, ALEA Special Agents and Troopers have conducted 107 of these specialized community outreach events.

Director of ALEA's Department of Public Safety (DPS), Colonel Jon Archer said, “Driving while impaired by any substance, legal or illegal, puts all motorists on Alabama roadways at risk. While spring break, prom and other seasonal activities are around the corner, we encourage parents to take this opportunity to speak directly to their children about the dangers of opioids at parties or other social gatherings and have a real conversation about the dangers of driving while impaired. To the students, we ask that you please ‘think smart before you start this spring break’ and speak up if you see a friend or loved one preparing to drive impaired.”

Many substances can impair driving, including alcohol, marijuana, opioids, methamphetamines, or any potentially impairing drug—prescribed or over the counter. Alcohol, marijuana, and other

drugs can impair the ability to drive because they slow coordination, judgment, and reaction times. Cocaine and methamphetamine can lead to aggressive and reckless driving behaviors. Using two or more drugs at the same time, including alcohol, can amplify the impairing effects of each drug a person has consumed. Some prescription and even over-the-counter medicines can cause extreme drowsiness, dizziness, and have other side effects that diminish an individual's ability to safely operate a motor vehicle. Citizens should read and follow all warning labels before driving and note that warnings against "operating heavy machinery" include driving a vehicle.

In addition to under-age drinking and drugs, parents and teens should be aware of candy laced with cannabis, fentanyl and other substances that are manufactured and packaged to look like actual candy. The packaging may only have small changes in spelling and may include such terms as "medicated," "THC" and "60 Minute Activation Time."

Fentanyl is considered a powerful synthetic (lab-made) opioid that is FDA-approved to treat severe pain related to surgery or complex pain conditions. Over the past decade, fentanyl that is made and distributed illegally and other illegally made synthetic opioids are increasingly being found in the drug supply. People both knowingly consume fentanyl and other synthetic opioids and in certain incidents consume and mix them with other drugs, such as heroin, cocaine, or counterfeit pills. This terrible drug remains a growing concern across the nation and will continue to be an educational focus of ALEA's Public Affairs Unit during safety presentations and community events across the state.

[Click here to view additional spring safety tips on ALEA's website.](#)

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