

# POLICE PRESS RELEASES

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The Santa Rosa Police Department has been awarded a new traffic safety grant for a year long program aimed at preventing deaths and injuries on our roadways. The \$235,370 grant awarded by the Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) to Santa Rosa will aid in the City's ongoing effort to improve traffic safety and the quality of life. Special traffic enforcement measures will be instituted by the Santa Rosa Police Department as part of an on-going commitment to keep our roadways safe through both enforcement and education.

"The Santa Rosa Police Department, keeping in line with Santa Rosa City Council goals, recognizes the importance of maintaining a strong enforcement and education focus in the area of traffic safety. This grant from the Office of Traffic Safety will provide the funding to allow the Santa Rosa Police Department to enhance its proactive efforts in the area of traffic safety and continue on its mission in making Santa Rosa a safer place to live, work and play."- Chief Tom Schwedhelm.

The grant will assist in efforts to deal with traffic safety problems and reduce the number of persons killed and injured in traffic collisions. Traffic deaths from all causes declined in California by 11.9% from 3,081 killed in 2009, to 2,715 in 2010. While alcohol impaired deaths saw a sharp decline last year, DUI deaths remain the largest sector, at more than 30% of traffic fatalities.

The grant activities will specifically target motorcycle safety, DUI offenders, drivers with suspended or revoked licenses, red light running, speeding, and seatbelt violations. This will be done through the use of DUI/driver's license checkpoints, special enforcement operations, and court stings where DUI offenders with suspended or revoked driver's licenses get behind the wheel after leaving court.

"Thanks to the dedicated hard work of agencies like the Santa Rosa Police Department, California has the fewest traffic fatalities since 1944," said OTS Director Christopher J. Murphy. "While this is good news, we know that only by keeping the pressure on through enforcement and public awareness can we hope to sustain these declines and save lives."

DUI/Drivers License Checkpoints are a key component of the grant. These highly visible, widely publicized events are meant to deter impaired driving, not to increase arrests. Research shows that crashes involving alcohol drop by an average of 20% when well-publicized checkpoints are conducted often enough. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), checkpoints have provided the most effective documented results of any of the DUI enforcement strategies, while yielding considerable cost savings of \$6 for every \$1 spent.

This grant also provides drug impairment training to help combat the increasing problem of drivers under the influence of legal and illegal substances. Grant funding will allow four officers to receive specialized training to detect impaired drivers under the influence of legal and illegal drugs. This training will provide on-the-spot assessment of drivers suspected of drug impairment.

For the second year in a row, the Santa Rosa Police Department will conduct special motorcycle safety enforcement operations. Motorcycle fatalities have finally dropped in California, following a decade long rise in deaths. In 2010, 353 motorcyclists were killed, a 37% drop from the all time high for California in 2008.

Santa Rosa Police Officers will be conducting specialized enforcement efforts throughout the next twelve months. Extra officers will be on duty patrolling areas and events where motorcycle crashes and incidents have occurred. Officers will be cracking down on traffic violations made by regular vehicle drivers and motorcyclists that result in far too many motorcycle collisions, injuries and deaths.

"We are on the right path with declining fatalities," said Murphy. "We have to stick to that path so that some day we can reach the vision we all share – *Toward zero deaths, every 1 counts.*"

Funding for this program is from the California Office of Traffic Safety through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.