

## **COMMUNITY COMMENT, AUGUST 28, 2014**

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This is Officer Matt Harvey with the California Highway Patrol for community comment.

The community is still reeling from a horrific fatal collision on State Route 36 that claimed the lives of four occupants including one juvenile, and left four additional occupants with major injuries. My thoughts and prayers go out to the friends and family members of those affected by this tragic event.

Recently, the Humboldt County Coroner's office toxicology report revealed that the driver was under the influence of a controlled substance at the time of the collision. It was further discovered that the majority of the vehicle's occupants were unrestrained at the time of the collision. This conclusive evidence adds to this tragic loss that could have been avoided.

In the wake of this tragic collision, there are a few things I would like to highlight that can prevent an incident of this magnitude from occurring in the future.

Driving impaired has resulted in a significant number of traffic collisions statewide. In many cases, there was somebody with the impaired driver prior to the collision that could have intervened by taking the keys away, giving them a ride home, or ensuring there is a sober driver prior to the festivities.

I know in this case the impairment was due to the illegal use of a controlled substance. But it brings up the point that we all have a part to play in reducing traffic collisions as a result of DUI. Whether it be intervening when drugs or alcohol is abused, designating a sober driver, or preventing a DUI driver from driving away, you could literally save a friend or loved one's life.

Second, the majority of the occupants were unrestrained at the time of the collision. Tragically, in 2013, more than 70 percent of those killed in collisions within CHP jurisdiction statewide were not wearing a seat belt. Please ensure all occupants within your vehicle are properly restrained 100 percent of the time, even when traveling a short distance.

Beginning this Friday night and continuing through Monday night, the CHP will be out seeking out impaired drivers, unrestrained motorists, and other unsafe vehicle violations during the Labor Day weekend Maximum Enforcement Period. Our goal is to ensure motorists make it to their final destination safely and to ensure the safety of those traveling Humboldt County's roadways.

Last year during the Labor Day weekend, 1 person was killed in a collision on northern Humboldt County roadways, which was equal to the same period in 2012. Both fatal victims were motorcyclists. Further, CHP Humboldt Area officer made a total of 6 DUI arrests during last year's Labor Day weekend.

As we approach Labor Day weekend, I wish you a safe and fun weekend. But please plan ahead by designating a sober driver before the festivities begin and buckle up.

If you suspect a driver to be DUI, I would encourage you to contact law enforcement immediately by dialing 9-1-1. That one phone call can save someone's life.

This has been Officer Matt Harvey with the California Highway Patrol for Community Comment.