

Patrols doubled

Oakland even tougher on drunks

By Michelle Odobina
special writer

All primary roads in Oakland County are being patrolled, and law enforcement manpower has been doubled, in an effort to target drunk drivers.

"Oakland County is a safer place to live," said Philip Haseltine, director of the state Office of Highway Safety Planning, at a news briefing to announce the project.

The project was announced by the Traffic Improvement Association (TIA) of Oakland County. It is funded by the County Board of Commissioners and the Haseltine's state office. It was launched July 1 and was expected to have its first impact over the Fourth of July holiday, "traditionally one of the worst holiday weekends in terms of alcohol-related accidents," according to Bruce Madsen, managing director of TIA.

THE PLAN, which will be in effect until May 1984, means virtually all primary roads will be patrolled with double the manpower and hours.

Alcohol Enforcement (AE) teams from the Sheriff's Department, assisted by local police, will patrol 1,500 miles of roads in 11 designated districts. Previously, 10 areas with 130 miles of roads had been targeted.

Kenneth Waters, AE enforcement coordinator with TIA, termed the plan "exciting." He said the areas were drawn up according to District Court areas. Local police chiefs were concerned that it not be set up too far from their jurisdictions.

The program is an extension of Oakland County's four-year Alcohol Enforcement-Education Project. The state initially provided funding of \$1.2 million.

To continue it into its fifth year, the state renewed a grant of \$145,000. Haseltine called it a sound investment. "When the Presidential Commission on Drunk Driving met in Detroit in November, they called the program a truly unique systems management approach against drunk driving," Haseltine said.

COUNTY EXECUTIVE Daniel T. Murphy called the program "a great one that gets drunk drivers off the road." At his recommendation, the county board allocated an additional \$140,000 to the project.

Madsen gave results of TIA's two-year study from April 1980 to April 1982. It showed success in arrests for OUIL (operating under the influence of liquor).

Countywide, arrests are up 30 percent. The Sheriff's Department showed an increase of 130 percent. Total number of arrests is about 11,000. Madsen said the figures translated into a reduction in accidents of 2,453 and an economic savings of \$14.2 million.

Carol Tomczak, alcohol project manager at TIA, said 41 police departments were represented at last week's briefing.

MICHAEL SEARING, a sheriff's deputy and member of the AE team, demonstrated a Breathalyzer in one of three mobile AE cars accessible to any local police department working with the sheriff's team.

Under Michigan's new drunk driving laws which took effect April 1, Searing and other officers can determine, at the time a person is stopped, whether a driver has had too much to drink.

Officers carry breath-testing equipment which determines blood alcohol content (BAC). One demonstration was of a pocket version, PBT (preliminary breath tester). It is used at the time a person is stopped to determine BAC level.

If a driver's BAC level is 0.10 percent or greater, he or she has committed a crime "per se" under the law.

Penalties for drunk driving are stiffer under the new laws.



DAVID FRANK/staff photographer

Deputy Michael Searing, member of an Oakland County Sheriff's alcohol enforcement team, demonstrates a Breathalyzer which can be used to make preliminary roadside tests.



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Septic tanks need regular pumping

Homeowners dependent on on-site sewage systems are encouraged to have their septic tanks pumped out on a routine basis.

The Oakland County Health Division advises homeowners to call a licensed septic tank cleaner to maintain the sewage disposal system.

Periodic pumping can reduce the possibility of sewage backflow into the home through toilets and floor drains or create a potential

health hazard by discharging smelly waste materials on the ground, health division employees said.

Premature system failure is often due to the carry-over of solids from the septic tank to the subsurface absorption system, usually at the field and/or dry well. The solids plug the pores in the soil, which prevent the liquid fraction of sewage from seeping into the ground.

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