



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE March 10, 2011

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“No Refusal” Weekend to target DWI

Working with all law enforcement agencies throughout the County, the Ellis County Sheriff’s Office and the County and District Attorney’s Office will be coordinating a “No Refusal” weekend to target drunk driving on March 18, 19 and 20, 2011 from 8 p.m. to 4 a.m.

“Statistics show that in 2009, Texas had over 3000 traffic fatalities – and an astounding 40 percent of those were due to alcohol impairment,” said Ellis County Sheriff Johnny Brown. “Nationwide, the percentage is only 32 percent.”

Having received grant funding through the Texas Department of Transportation, the Sheriff’s Office has already been focusing on DWI enforcement, targeting dates that historically have seen a high incidence of violations. Spring Break is included in the program.

“The law requires that a person arrested for DWI provide a sample of the officer’s choice for measurement – either a blood sample or a breath sample,” Brown added, noting that unlawful refusal rates in Texas stand at almost 50 percent. “On ‘No Refusal’ weekend, however, law enforcement officials will not take no for an answer.”

County and District Attorney Patrick Wilson said prosecutors and judges will be on site at the Wayne McCollum Detention Center to process these cases on March 18, 19 and 20.

“The prosecutors will assist the officers with the drafting of the search warrants, and the judges will review them immediately,” Wilson explained. “If the judge approves the warrant the suspect’s blood will then be drawn by nurses at the detention center.”

Blood samples will be submitted to the Texas Department of Public Safety for analysis.

The “no refusal” program ensures that law enforcement officials will be able to obtain scientific evidence in 100 percent of DWI arrests, ensuring that the innocent are found innocent and the guilty are found guilty.

“For several years no-refusal programs have been a huge success for DWI enforcement across the state. Ellis County is long overdue for this effort,” Wilson said. “Last year there were

more than 400 DWI cases filed with my office. The citizens of this county deserve to feel safe from dangerous drivers. Hopefully this is a step in that direction.”

Officials hope the program will prevent people from getting behind the wheel while under the influence of alcohol, improving safety in the community. Participating agencies include the police departments from Ennis, Ferris, Garrett, Glenn Heights, Italy, Maypearl, Midlothian, Milford, Ovilla, Palmer, Red Oak, and Waxahachie as well as the Texas Department of Public Safety, the Sheriff’s Office, and the County and District Attorney’s Office. All of these agencies will increase patrols in their jurisdictions during the “No Refusal” period.

“We do not enjoy arresting individuals and bringing them to jail, however, it is part of the job,” Brown said. “But until a person has to go and notify a family about the loss of a loved one because of a DWI, they cannot understand the gravity of driving while intoxicated. As a grandparent, parent and Sheriff, I truly urge people to drive responsibly.”

