

Pro Race Driver Sarah Fisher Joins Director to Raise Red Flag on Drugged Driving

Professional race driver Sarah Fisher joined Director Kerlikowske and National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) Administrator David Strickland for a news conference June 23 to raise public awareness of drugged driving on the Nation's roadways.

Also taking part in the event were Cathy L. Lanier, Chief of Police in Washington, DC, and Jill Ingrassia of the American Automobile Association.

"Americans are familiar with the terrible consequences of drunk driving and the dangers posed by texting or talking on a cell phone while driving," said Director Kerlikowske. "As we approach the Fourth of July, one of the busiest periods on the Nation's roads, ONDCP is teaming up with public and private-sector partners across the Nation to raise awareness of the dangers of another important public safety issue – drugged driving."

Recent studies have shown that a significant number of drivers have drugs in their systems when they get behind the wheel, said Director Kerlikowske. "But just as we have made progress in addressing drunk driving, we can raise awareness of drugged driving and educate people about the dangers it presents. Drugs negatively affect judgment, reaction time, motor skills, and memory. Those who drive with drugs in their systems put us all at risk."

The most recent Monitoring the Future Study shows that, in 2008, one in ten high school seniors admitted to having driven a vehicle after smoking marijuana in the two weeks prior to the survey.

According to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, more than 12 percent of 18- to 25-year-olds admitted to driving under the influence of an illicit drug at least once in 2008. And the latest National Roadside Survey by NHTSA shows that one in eight weekend, nighttime drivers tested positive for illegal drugs.

Fisher, who, since the age of 19, has driven in the Indianapolis 500 nine times – more than any other woman in history – addressed her message to young people.



Professional race driver Sarah Fisher joined Director Kerlikowske at a June 23 news conference in Washington to raise public awareness of the dangers of drugged driving.

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– Sarah Fisher, professional race driver

"The drugged driving awareness campaign gives me the opportunity to speak directly to the younger generation of drivers," she said. "Several studies have shown that too many young people get behind the wheel of a car after smoking marijuana or taking drugs. They need to make smarter and safer decisions."

Fisher offered some advice to drivers of all ages: "I have been a professional race driver since I was a teenager, and I can tell you that – whether you are driving 20 miles an hour on a city street or 220 miles an hour at the Indy 500 – you don't want to

have impaired judgment or slow reaction time. To be safe," she said, "you need to be at your best."

The Office of National Drug Control Policy is working to increase the number of States with effective drugged driving laws. Too often, inadequate laws allow people who drive after taking drugs to evade prosecution and avoid responsibility, thus increasing the chances they will continue to be a public safety threat. Per se laws will help in this effort.

ONDCP is also working with NHTSA and other partners to increase training opportunities for law enforcement officers, as well as with other Federal agencies to improve and standardize laboratory testing to detect the presence of drugs in drivers. Establishing lab standards will improve the ability of law enforcement officials to hold drivers accountable and, when necessary, get them into treatment.

To help raise awareness of drugged driving, ONDCP has produced public service announcements featuring Director Kerlikowske with Fisher and other public officials, including Virginia Governor Bob McDonnell, Maryland Attorney General Doug Gansler, and DC's Chief Lanier. The announcements are available online at <http://www.WhiteHouseDrugPolicy.gov/druggeddriving/>