



# OFFICE OF THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### SARATOGA COUNTY LAUNCHES DWI-IGNITION INTERLOCK ENFORCEMENT INITIATIVE

*Saratoga County Received \$35,000 in state grant funding for DWI-Ignition Interlock Enforcement*

BALLSTON SPA, NY -- Saratoga County Officials today announced the Saratoga County Department of Probation and the Saratoga County Sheriff's Office received a \$35,000 grant from the Governor's Traffic Safety Committee for enforcement of the State's DWI-Ignition Interlock Device (IID) Enforcement Initiative.

Together, the Saratoga County Sheriff's Office and the Department of Probation will utilize this funding to enforce the state program aimed at catching convicted drunk drivers who break the law by operating vehicles without ignition interlock devices or by circumventing or tampering with the devices to make them inoperable.

The program's goal is to increase compliance with the state's DWI laws, while helping law enforcement identify and arrest those individuals attempting to operate a motor vehicle without a court-ordered interlock device. The grant funds training as well as overtime costs for law enforcement, allowing agencies to conduct targeted sweeps aimed at catching offenders between Memorial Day and Labor Day.

Interlock devices are installed on the ignition of a vehicle to prevent the operator from starting it if they've been drinking. An individual must first blow into the device, which can then prevent the vehicle from starting if the presence of alcohol is detected.

Individuals convicted of drunk driving must install an ignition interlock device installation on any vehicle they intend to operate as a result of Leandra's Law, which also makes it a felony to drive drunk with a child under 16 in the vehicle. The law took effect in December 2009 and is named in memory of 11-year-old Leandra Rosado, a passenger in an SUV who died when the vehicle's intoxicated driver crashed on the Henry Hudson Parkway in New York City.

Theodore T. Kusnierz, Jr., Chairman of the Saratoga County Board of Supervisors said, "In Saratoga County we are proud to support our law enforcement at all levels and commend our Sheriff's Deputies and Probation Officers for the work they do each day that helps keep Saratoga County one of the safest counties in New York State. We are thankful to the Governor's Safety Committee for providing this grant funding that will allow our Sheriff's Office and Department of Probation to take dangerous drivers who circumvent New York's DWI laws off our roads."

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Michael H. Zurlo, Saratoga County Sheriff said, “In Saratoga County we have zero tolerance for those who break the law. Yet, even with some of the toughest state DWI laws in the nation, there are still irresponsible individuals who try to circumvent using a court-ordered ignition inter-lock device, posing a threat to everyone who shares our roadways. We look forward working with the County Department of Probation to help make Saratoga County roadways safer.”

Susan Costanzo, Director of the Saratoga County Department of Probation said, “The Saratoga County Department of Probation works each day to build safer communities by supervising individuals on probation and to affect positive change in criminal offender behavior. When those convicted of DWI offences don’t abide by their court ordered use of an ignition interlock device, they must be held accountable. We look forward to working with the Sheriff’s Office on this important safety initiative.”

Under Leandra’s Law, judges are required to order all drivers convicted of misdemeanor or felony drunk driving charges to install and maintain ignition interlock devices on any vehicles they own or operate for at least six months at their own expense.

Individuals who attest under oath that they have sold or transferred title to their vehicles – and as a result aren’t ordered to install the device – still have the ignition interlock condition on their New York driver’s license and DMV license file. These individuals are still prohibited from driving a vehicle without an interlock, but some continue to do so in violation of Leandra’s Law.

The law also makes it illegal to tamper with or circumvent an ignition interlock device. Individuals may face jail time if convicted of any offense under the law. In addition, individuals on probation may be charged with a violation of their sentence if charged with an ignition interlock offense.

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