

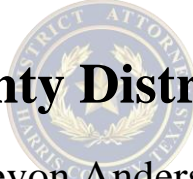
Belinda Hill
First Assistant

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Criminal Justice Center
1201 Franklin, Suite 600
Houston, Texas 77002

Harris County District Attorney

Devon Anderson



Contact

Camille Hepola
Jeff McShan

En Español: Will Mejia
Maritza Antu

W: (713) 755-0122

DA Launches Multi-Agency No Refusal Initiative Ahead of July 4th Weekend

Harris County District Attorney Devon Anderson announced today a multi-agency no refusal initiative ahead of the holiday weekend. Houston Mayor Annise Parker, Houston Police Chief Charles McClelland, Harris County Sheriff Adrian Garcia and area law enforcement joined DA Anderson at a joint news conference at the staging area for the July 4th "Freedom Over Texas" event at Sam Houston Park.

The District Attorney's Office will have extra prosecutors on duty to assist law enforcement agencies in filing cases on arrested intoxicated drivers throughout the holiday weekend. Under the no refusal law, a search warrant will be issued to draw the blood of any suspected intoxicated driver who refuses a breathalyzer or to give a blood sample. The no refusal initiative will begin on the evening of Thursday, July 3rd and last through the morning of Sunday, July 6th.

"This joint effort to promote a safe holiday weekend in Harris County through a no refusal initiative reflects an effort to reduce the number of impaired drivers on the road and ultimately save lives," said DA Devon Anderson. "We know many Harris County residents will be celebrating July 4th festivities. If your celebrations include consuming alcoholic beverages, be sure to make arrangements to call a cab or to spend the night at a friend's home. Please don't drink and drive."

There will be several fireworks displays throughout Harris County on July 4th. Mayor Annise Parker has announced the city of Houston's "Freedom Over Texas" fireworks display. With a large crowd expected, Mayor Parker is teaming up with area law enforcement to make sure everyone stays safe and celebrates responsibly through the weekend.

"Thousands of people are expected to enjoy our Southwest Airlines 'Freedom Over Texas' celebration when we light up the sky with fireworks," said Mayor Parker. "But remember, safety comes first. Have a designated driver if you plan to drink alcohol and take steps to prevent heatstroke by drinking plenty of water."

This July 4th holiday, AAA Texas says 3 million Texans are planning to travel this week and 2.5 million will drive to Independence Day celebrations which is a 3.1 increase in auto travel for this holiday compared to last year.

“With all the people on the roads during the holiday travel period, we remind everyone that drinking and driving is never safe,” said AAA Texas/New Mexico Representative Sarah Schimmer. “The decision you make to never drink and drive and never get into a car or truck with someone who is drunk will be one of the most crucial decisions you make in your lifetime.”

In April 2013, the Harris County District Attorney’s Office became one of the first Houston Area counties to enforce no refusal every day. Over the past three years, during the July 4th weekend the number of alcohol related incidents in Harris County has remained high. In 2011, there were 271 cases, in 2012, there were 158 cases, in 2013, there were 212 cases.