Chances Of Catching Drunk Drivers Improving

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ATAC director Phil Bordelon says the chances of being arrested for driving while intoxicated in Lafayette are “becoming better every day.”

One reason Bordelon gives for the increased odds is that law enforcement officers are receiving extra training in detecting drunk drivers and enforcing drunk driving laws.

Yesterday, for instance, about 50 officers from the City Police Department, Lafayette Parish Sheriff’s Department and State Police attended an eight-hour seminar to improve detection skills and arrest procedures. The session was sponsored by Alcohol Traffic Action Campaign (ATAC), the local chapter of Mothers Against Drunk Driving and the USL Police Academy.

Officers were shown how to administer tests to measure the level of intoxication and were taught how to properly document an OWI arrest.

“Having only two hours of training in a regular academy session makes this seminar essential,” said Police Academy training director George Armbruster.

Speakers included Dave Hutchins, city prosecutor and assistant OWI prosecutor, and Cary Menard, indigent defender for Lafayette City Court.

Bordelon estimated that arrests for drunk driving in the City of Lafayette are up 128 percent this year compared to the same time period last year. Almost 600 OWI arrests have been made by City Police this year, he said.

Alcohol-related accidents are down 25 percent to 30 percent, while traffic fatalities are down about 52 percent, according to Bordelon.

Bordelon said the seminar conducted yesterday was intended to help officers make “quality” arrests that will stand up in court.