REDDI Program Is Targeting Lafayette Parish Drunk Drivers

Friday the 13th is an unlucky day for drinking drivers.

Today a new program called REDDI (Report Every Drunk Driver Immediately) begins in Lafayette Parish.

Unveiling a REDDI billboard, law enforcement officials invited all citizens to become involved in getting drunk drivers off the roads.

Now, motorists can dial 911 — the emergency number in Lafayette Parish — anytime they see a vehicle being operated in an erratic, suspicious or dangerous manner.

"Call 911, and within seconds, a law enforcement team will be dispatched," said Phil Bordelon, director of Lafayette's Alcohol Traffic Action Campaign (ATAC), which is coordinating the REDDI project.

"Do not give your name, but please, try to report the location, direction, license number and description of the car," he said.

Citizens should not try to follow the suspected drinking driver. That's the job of the Lafayette Police Department, Sheriff's Department and State Police officers who will be dispatched 24 hours a day.

Officers will determine the condition of the suspected drunk driver. The citizen is not liable under any circumstances.

How do you spot a drinking driver? Any unusual driving pattern can be a tipoff. Some frequent signs are: weaving, extremely fast or slow speeds or driving too close to curbs and center dividers.

"Your 10-cent phone call to the 911 emergency number could keep someone alive," said Police Chief James Romero.

"Each year, drunk drivers kill 25,000 people in the United States and we want Lafayette Parish citizens to be able to protect themselves and their families from such tragedy," said Sheriff-elect Don Breaux.

Mayor Dud Lastrapes said REDDI is a way for responsible citizens to make the streets safer for all. "This is a program that has worked well in other states and also in Louisiana, and we're proud to bring it to Lafayette.

REDDI also operates in Colorado, Washington, Kansas, Idaho, North Carolina, Kentucky, Wyoming, Nebraska and Oregon. In Colorado, 24,000 citizens have called REDDI since December 1980, removing thousands of drunk drivers from the roads.

In Oregon, 3,000 citizens have called REDDI, and nearly 30 percent of the suspected drunk drivers have been stopped by law enforcement patrols, resulting in 400 arrests.

Natchitoches Parish and Claiborne Parish also have REDDI programs administered by sheriff's departments.

However, Lafayette is the first parish in Louisiana to employ the 911