What Happens When Drunks Drive

Citizens have a chance today to see what happens when people drink too much alcohol and drive.

There will be a drinking driver awareness demonstration from 1-3 p.m. at Cajun Field. Participants will drive a specially designed obstacle course while sober. They will later be intoxicated to the .05 percent blood-alcohol level, which is half of the state level of legal intoxication.

They will then drive a dual-control car, accompanied by a police officer, while traffic experts rate their driving abilities and compare results.

The drivers will next drink more alcohol until they reach the .10 percent blood alcohol level and repeat the obstacle course.

Participants will include 15th Judicial District Judge Ronnie Cox, District Attorney Nathan Stansbury, Lafayette Parish Sheriff's Department Chief Deputy Hook Robichaux, Mayor Dud Lastrapes, Maria Placer of KLFY-TV, Charles Lenox of the Daily Advertiser, Robert Jackson of KATC-TV and Rick LeBlanc of KTDS radio station.

No 'Prohibitionist Movement'

The demonstration is sponsored by Louisiana State Police, Acadiana Safety Association and Concerned Citizens/Mothers Against Drunk Drivers. It is aimed at showing the public how alcohol can affect driving.

"It’s not a prohibitionist movement," said Mary Lib Gueiro, a member of CC/MADD and a City Parish Task Force on Drunk Driving. She added that it is intended to promote responsible drinking.

"We just want people to understand what 'legally drunk' means," she commented.

In addition to witnessing how alcohol affects participants of various ages, weights and alcohol tolerance levels, spectators will also get a first-hand look at the method of "breath testing" used by law enforcement officers to determine if someone is legally drunk.

New Law Now In Effect

"I'm really pleased they're offering this demonstration," said City Council member W.M. "Dub" Hudson. He has talked to participants in similar demonstrations held in other cities.

"They said they were amazed," Hudson commented. "They thought they were in better control than they were. I guess that's just human nature..."

Hudson introduced a new ordinance which went into effect Friday that makes it illegal to drink alcoholic beverages while driving in the city limits or carry alcoholic beverages in open containers in private vehicles.

A recent statewide public opinion survey indicated that 77 percent of all persons polled favored legislation banning drinking while driving.

Such a bill has been approved by the state House of Representatives and is on its way to the Senate for consideration during this legislative session.

The owner of the Daiquiri Factory, located just outside the city limits, is now selling his product in cups which have tops secured with masking tape.

But Hudson said he's doesn't believe the taped lids will survive a legal test.

"I don't think that will stand the test of the (definition) of the sealed container," the Councilman commented. "I wouldn't interpret that as a sealed container."

He added that in his opinion, an example of a sealed container is a liquor bottle which has an unbroken plastic seal around its top or an unbroken state tax seal.