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District Attorney
<http://da.lacounty.gov>



**REMARKS BY LOS ANGELES COUNTY
DISTRICT ATTORNEY JACKIE LACEY
IMPAIRED DRIVING NEWS CONFERENCE
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Today's message, unfortunately, is not new. Each holiday season, we in law enforcement gather together in hopes of saving lives. We repeat the same warning: Do not get behind the wheel, if you have been drinking.

This year, we have expanded that traditional warning. Today's message is: Do not get behind the wheel of a vehicle, if you have been drinking or using drugs – whether they are legal or illegal.

Impaired driving leads to death, life-altering injuries and heartache for families. The danger associated with driving under the influence is greater than ever. We continue to voice our concerns about drinking and driving. But we also must be mindful of a new and growing threat on our streets. Driving under the influence of drugs can have the same deadly consequences.

We know the legalization of marijuana will lead to more DUIs, more injuries and more deaths. These incidents also present new challenges for law enforcement: Drivers may legally use cannabis in California, yet it remains illegal to drive while impaired.

My office is working with the California Office of Traffic Safety to develop strategies to successfully prosecute offenders impaired by marijuana and other drugs. This includes training law enforcement personnel and prosecutors. They must be able to determine whether drugs contributed to serious or fatal traffic collisions. They also must know what evidence is needed for criminal charges to be filed. In addition, we are working to certify more law enforcement officers as Drug Recognition Experts in Los Angeles County.

My goal is to keep our streets safe for our family, our friends and our neighbors. Driving under the influence affects us all. While we tend to focus on cannabis, other drugs also may impair a driver.

Just last month, my office charged a man with felony gross vehicular manslaughter while intoxicated in the 2017 death of an 11-year-old girl in Boyle Heights. Elektra Yepez was near her home. She was with her mom and two aunts at a taco stand. A vehicle struck a parked car, pushing it over the curb and into a group of people, killing Elektra and injuring her mom and aunts. The driver allegedly was under the influence of nitrous oxide – also known as laughing gas.

As a result, a family is preparing to observe another holiday without their beloved Elektra. And a 23-year-old defendant is facing more than 13 years in prison. This case is being prosecuted by my new DUI Training and Prosecution Section.

It is a real-life reminder of how impaired driving ruins lives.

My office filed nearly 10,000 criminal cases involving driving under the influence in just the past 12 months. We will remain vigilant in our efforts to keep our streets safe through enforcement and prosecution. But more than anything I hope we can prevent these crimes.

It's simple: Don't drive, if you have been drinking. Don't drive, if you have been using drugs. Don't let others wreck this holiday season. Help us make the roads safer for us all.

About the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office

Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey leads the largest local prosecutorial office in the nation. Her staff of nearly 1,000 attorneys, 300 investigators and 800 support staff members is dedicated to seeking justice for victims of crime and enhancing public safety. Last year, the [Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office](#) prosecuted more than 71,000 felony defendants and nearly 112,000 misdemeanor defendants.