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Fatal DUI Numbers Remain High in San Diego County; District Attorney Using Grant to Target DUI Offenders

Most Arrestees Test Positive for Both Drugs and Alcohol

San Diego County District Attorney [Summer Stephan](#) announced today that her office is receiving an \$810,000 grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety for the tenth year in a row to prevent and prosecute impaired driving deaths and DUI-drug cases. The grant award comes as San Diego County fatal DUI numbers remain at an all-time high.

In 2022, 33 people were killed in 32 DUI-related crashes. So far in 2023, there have been 25 people killed.

“We have a specialized team of prosecutors and investigators who hold offenders accountable and work to deter impaired driving,” DA Stephan said. “The increase over the last few years of people in our community dying at the hands of impaired drivers is disturbing. As the holiday season approaches, people need to make responsible choices, use ride sharing services and keep their friends and family from getting behind the wheel if they are impaired.”

Data shows average blood-alcohol levels of drivers involved in Driving Under the Influence cases remain high at over .18%. Prosecutors say that more than half of individuals being arrested for driving under the influence have both alcohol and drugs in their system—a deadly combination.

The grant will allow the DA’s DUI Homicide Unit to continue its critical work. The unit, which launched in 2014, streamlines complex DUI cases by creating expertise within the DA’s Office. The specialized unit creates uniformity in sentencing among the four adult courthouses. In addition, the unit helps law enforcement adapt to changes in technology by having a designated DA Investigator who is trained in the latest techniques in collision reconstruction. Since its inception, the unit has prosecuted nearly 225 cases and they have received more than \$4.5 million in funding from the Office of Traffic Safety.

Funding will also be used to:



- Provide training for select prosecutors to become experts in DUI-drug cases.
- Provide training for prosecutors and investigators through California's Traffic Safety Resource Prosecutor Program as well as San Diego County specific training
- Host quarterly regional meetings with law enforcement partners to improve DUI investigations and prosecutions.

In 2022, the District Attorney's Office filed 5,682 DUI cases, including 370 DUI drug cases and 151 DUI cases in which both alcohol and drugs were present in the driver's system. So far this year, the DA's Office has filed 4,635 DUI cases including 253 DUI drug cases and 219 combined alcohol and drug impairment cases. Many of these numbers are significant increases from years past.

Funding from the California Office of Traffic Safety is provided through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

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About the San Diego County District Attorney's Office

The San Diego County DA's Office prosecutes all felony crimes in the county and misdemeanor crimes committed outside the City of San Diego. The office files about 40,000 criminal cases a year and balances prosecution with numerous crime prevention programs. District Attorney Summer Stephan leads the office of more than 1,000 dedicated employees who pursue fair and equal justice, and support victims daily across San Diego County.

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