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DUI Prosecutions Down 10% as DA Uses Grant to Target Serious Offenders

Despite Dip Fatal DUI Cases Still on the Rise

San Diego County District Attorney [Summer Stephan](#) announced today that the number of overall DUI prosecutions prosecuted by her office has gone down by 10 percent, and noted the ongoing work of the specialized DUI Homicide Unit, which is in its fifth year of receiving grant funding to prosecute fatal and serious injury DUI cases.

Last year, more than 9,934 DUI-related cases were prosecuted in San Diego County, down from 10,322 the year before, a 10 percent decrease. At the same time, however, the District Attorney's Office prosecuted 409 DUI with injury or fatality cases. San Diego County had one of the worst years for DUI fatalities in the past 15 years in 2017. The District Attorney's Office prosecuted 25 DUI fatality cases, up from 17 in 2016 and 18 in 2015.

"This year is on track to be as bad as or worse than the deadly high for fatal DUIs in 2017," District Attorney Summer Stephan said. "There have been 19 defendants charged with DUI murder or manslaughter this year alone. Every year we see lives shattered by death and injury – all for something that is 100 percent preventable. This grant will help our office continue its hard work in prosecuting these cases and in collaborating with our law enforcement and community partners to prevent harm before it happens. It's encouraging that overall DUI cases are declining."

The DA's Office is receiving a grant of \$258,946 from the Office of Traffic Safety to prevent and prosecute impaired driving deaths. To date, the organization has given more than \$2.3 million in DUI grants to the DA's Office.



As part of the grant and with assistance from the State's Traffic Safety Resource Program, the DUI Homicide Unit coordinates and participates in DUI prevention and awareness in schools, military bases and colleges. It also provides training to local law enforcement agencies.

Funding from this DUI Prosecution Grant will aid the District Attorney's Office in handling cases through each step of the criminal process. This includes prosecuting both alcohol and drug-impaired driving cases. In fatal and major injury DUI vehicle collisions, members of the team may respond to the crash scene to assist in the investigation.

The DUI Homicide Unit streamlines complex DUI cases by creating expertise within the office. This results in a quicker resolution to cases and speedier justice to the families who have lost a loved one. 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.

A dedicated DA Investigator assists law enforcement in finding DUI suspects through investigative techniques. Many times defendants leave the scene of a crash because they are impaired. By having a dedicated team working with law enforcement, authorities are better able to find offenders and ultimately get the message out that if you leave the scene of a crash, you will be caught and prosecuted.

In recent years, California has seen an increase in drug-impaired driving crashes. The District Attorney's Office supports efforts from OTS reminding the public that "DUI Doesn't Just Mean Booze." If you take prescription drugs, particularly those with a driving or operating machinery warning on the label, you might be impaired enough to get a DUI. Marijuana use can also be impairing, especially in combination with alcohol or other drugs, and can result in a DUI arrest and conviction.

"Vertical prosecution teams help keep streets across San Diego safe by taking people off the road who ignore the law and drive impaired," said OTS Director Rhonda Craft. "Driving under the influence is a crime that will not be tolerated. Funding the prosecution of individuals who put lives at risk is one of many ways we are working to educate the public on the dangers and consequences of driving under the influence."

Grant funding from the California Office of Traffic Safety through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration will change how our office handles these challenging cases to be better, more efficient and more effective.

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Note: Misdemeanor DUI cases in the City of San Diego are prosecuted by the City Attorney's Office. Misdemeanor DUI cases outside the City of San Diego are generally prosecuted by the District Attorney's Office. The DA's Office prosecutes all felony DUI cases in the County.