

December 19, 2007

STENEHJEM ANNOUNCES 24/7 SOBRIETY PROGRAM To Keep Repeat DUI Offenders off the Road

BISMARCK – Keeping drunk drivers off the road is a goal of law enforcement agencies and courts across the state. Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem today announced a program to help those efforts. The “24/7 Sobriety Program” will take effect on January 1, 2008, in the twelve counties that comprise the South Central Judicial District.

Under the 24/7 Sobriety pilot program, repeat DUI offenders in Burleigh, Morton and other counties in the program area will be ordered to complete breath alcohol testing twice a day as a condition of bond.

“The 24/7 Sobriety program is designed to stop repeat DUI offenders from continuing to drink and drive,” said Stenehjem. “A condition of bond will be that they cannot drink alcohol. If they do, the breath test will show it and they will be taken directly to jail. This program will make our streets safer for everyone.”

The individual pays \$1.00 each time to offset the costs of testing. If the arrestee fails to show for testing, bond is revoked. In select cases, the court can order remote electronic alcohol monitoring. Although not initially available, Stenehjem anticipates the program may expand in the future to include alcohol testing as a condition of probation.

According to the ND Highway Patrol, 62 of the 110 traffic deaths so far this year were alcohol related. Recently published statewide crime statistics showed that in 2006, 6,480 individuals were arrested for DUI. One in three DUI convictions was for a second or subsequent offense.

Stenehjem thanked South Dakota Attorney General Larry Long and his staff for their efforts in helping North Dakota to establish the 24/7 Sobriety program. South Dakota also loaned equipment to offset North Dakota’s start up costs. Once established, the 24/7 program is self-funding.

South Dakota has seen great success with its sobriety program, which has been in effect since 2005. Over 99.8% of participants show up for testing and 99.3% of participants pass their scheduled tests. An evaluation of South Dakota’s program concluded “that the overall result of the program is a reduction in program participants drinking and driving.”¹

“I am confident that the 24/7 sobriety program will be equally effective here,” said Stenehjem. “I believe it will reduce DUI arrests and, more important, keep drunk drivers off the road.” Participants whose licenses are suspended or revoked must arrange transportation to the testing site.

¹ <http://www.state.sd.us/attorney/dui247/AnalysisSD24.pdf>

Stenehjem had asked the 2007 Legislature for authority to establish a pilot program during the biennium to address repeat drunk driving offenses. The legislature authorized the Attorney General to expand the program into other judicial districts during the biennium, although Stenehjem said for the time being the program would be available only in the South Central judicial district.

The twelve counties participating in the 24/7 Sobriety pilot program are: Burleigh, Emmons, Grant, Kidder, Logan, McIntosh, McLean, Mercer, Morton, Oliver, Sheridan, and Sioux.

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