

Program targets repeat drunken driving offenders

By Ray Huard
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Convicted drunken drivers who are on probation will be under closer scrutiny to keep them from drinking and driving again, county officials announced yesterday.

"If you're going to get hammered in San Diego County, you're going to get nailed," Supervisor Dianne Jacob said at a news conference announcing a \$5 million state grant targeting repeat drunken driving offenders.

"As we approach the 4th of July weekend, San Diego County is declaring its independence from drunk drivers," Jacob said.

The program will be coordinated locally by the county Probation Department. The grant money is divided among 17 counties with San Diego County's share about \$1.1 million, probation officials said.

The money will be used to hire eight more probation officers, said Chief Probation Officer Vincent J. Iaria.

Extra officers will enable the county to increase random drug and alcohol testing of people on probation for drunken driving, conduct more unannounced home visits, and monitor attendance at court-ordered alcohol and drug-abuse programs, Iaria said.

"The message here is if you had a DUI (driving while under the influence) conviction and had one drink, you could end up behind bars," Iaria said.

Drivers on probation for DUI usually are forbidden to have any alcohol in their system while driving.

According to statewide statistics, about 18 percent of those arrested for drunken driving have a previous conviction for the same offense and about 4 percent are three-time offenders, Iaria said.

"These are the people more likely to cause death or injury," Iaria said.

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