

Road safety warrior on the road

RACHEL Stubbs has a busy period ahead as road safety co-ordinator for the Waitomo and Otorohanga district councils.

At present Mrs Stubbs is organising various road safety projects focussed on the holiday season.

And she should hit the ground running having been the North King Country road safety co-ordinator from 2003-2006.

"The Plan B4 U Party project is all about thinking ahead and making sure you have made good plans to get home safe," she says.

"During this time of the year, people are out and about, celebrating and enjoying themselves.

"The aim of this campaign is to get people thinking ahead and making plans like designating a sober driver or staying at a mate's place."

Mrs Stubbs' role also involves working with Population Health and the police on their ClubCHAMPS initiative.

"ClubCHAMPS is aimed at reducing alcohol-related harm within the grassroots King Country sports clubs of Te Kuiti, Tau-marunui and Otorohanga."

The country's lower drinking limit, which came into effect on December 1, is also in Mrs Stubbs' sights.

"The best advice is to not have anything to drink if you plan to drive home.

"People need to understand the blood alcohol concentration (or BAC) – is the amount of alcohol present in 100 millilitres of blood."

LOWER LIMITS

The limit for drivers over the age of 20 is 50mg of alcohol per 100ml of blood (BAC 0.05).

Drivers who test positive at the lower limit will receive a \$200 fine and 50 demerit points and if they test positive at 80mg and above, will face criminal charges.

"How your body processes alcohol can vary depending on your gender, body size, whether you have eaten recently and the level of body fat," says Mrs Stubbs.

"The holiday period can be a hectic and crazy time when people are often tired and stressed, but getting to families and friends for Christmas and New

Year is very important.

"Often people depart on long roads trips when they're not quite at their best."

Tips to keep drivers safe include taking regular breaks, drinking plenty of water, swapping drivers, keeping the kids entertained with plenty to do in the back seat so the driver can concentrate.

FATIGUE STOPS

During the past five years driver fatigue has contributed to about 13% of fatal crashes in New Zealand.

"Part of my role involves running fatigue stops to combat driver fatigue," says Mrs Stubbs.

"My aim is to encourage drivers to pull over and take a break.

"This could be a cup of coffee and something to eat, or maybe a power nap for 10-20 minutes which can be all it takes to improve driver alertness.

"It is a serious issue because people's reaction time is slower and it takes longer to interpret and understand the traffic situation, or people can fall asleep at the wheel."



FATIGUE FIGHTER: North King Country road safety co-ordinator Rachel Stubbs will be busy this festive season manning fatigue stops on December 24 and January 4 and is encouraging people to plan before they party, and not to drink alcohol at all if planning to drive home.

Mrs Stubbs is running fatigue stops on Christmas Eve, December 24 and January 4, to target Christmas and holiday traffic heading south from Te Kuiti.






Warning signs of driver fatigue include blinking frequently, continuous yawning, missing road signs or

intersections and wandering over the centreline or road edge.

"People need to take steps to make sure they are safe on the road," says Mrs Stubbs.

"Share the driving when possible and take rest breaks."

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