



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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## RINGING IN THE NEW YEAR RESPONSIBLY

PATTY RITCHIE December 21, 2015

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New Year's Eve is a time to look back on the memories we've made in the past twelve months and think about what the year ahead will hold. As we prepare to ring in 2016, it's so important that we take the steps necessary to make sure we stay safe while celebrating.

One of the most important pieces of advice to heed on New Year's Eve—and year round—is not getting behind the wheel if you've been drinking, and not riding with anyone who has

been consuming alcohol. According to the U.S. National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, 40 percent of traffic-related deaths during Christmas and New Year's involve drunk drivers. That's a 12 percent increase over the rest of the month of December.

Not drinking and driving is just one piece of the puzzle when it comes to celebrating New Year's Eve safely. Here are other tips to help you ring in 2016 responsibly:

***Plan ahead:*** Before you even leave the house, make sure you know how you're getting home. Try to make plans to have a friend or family member who isn't drinking take care of transportation and if you plan to rely on a cab to get home at the end of the night, make sure you plan ahead. New Year's Eve is one of the busiest days of the year for cab companies, so you'll want to make sure you have a list of options—and phone numbers—handy.

***Be alert:*** With more people out on the roads, you'll need to make sure you're paying extra attention if you're driving on New Year's Eve. Also, as we all know, weather can change in an instant in our region. Make sure you are adequately prepared for anything that might come your way by carrying an emergency kit that includes things like a flashlight, blanket, hand warmers and a shovel in your vehicle.

***Be mindful of your surroundings:*** If you're going to a public celebration on New Year's Eve, make sure you're aware of your surroundings. Keep a distance from those who seem out of control and if you're out with a group, stick together.

***Know your limits:*** If you plan on drinking on New Year's Eve, make sure you do so responsibly. Don't over-drink, stay hydrated by alternating alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages and make sure you aren't drinking on an empty stomach. Also, it goes without saying that you should never leave your drink unattended.

***Charge your cell phone:*** There's nothing worse than being separated from your group during a night out and not having a way to get in touch. Before you head out for the evening, make sure you fully charge your cell phone and plan to take along your charger or back up battery. It's also a good idea to make sure you carry the phone numbers of your emergency contacts with you too.

***Be a good host:*** Hosting a party on New Year's Eve? Make sure you think about the safety of your guests by having the numbers of cab companies readily available and preparing extra spots for people to sleep should they find themselves without a ride home and needing to stay over.

As we prepare to turn the calendar page to January, I wish you all the best for a fun New Year's Eve spent safely with friends and loved ones. Happy 2016!