

**Norwood to hold 'Mock Crash'**

**Organizations to educate youth about drinking, driving**

The Norwood Fire Protection District will hold a mock crash on Wednesday, April 23rd. The "crash," an exercise for DUI prevention and education, is the result of several months' worth of work.

Officials with the Norwood Fire District, San Miguel Sheriff's Office, the Colorado State Patrol, the county coroner, CareFlight of the Rockies, Westend Montrose Sheriff's Office, Nucla/Naturita Fire District - along with judges and prosecutors from the Colorado 7th Judicial District -will help make the mock crash as effective as possible.

Students from Norwood and Nucla in grades eight through 12 will participate.

The day begins at 9:00 AM at the County fairgrounds where students will be alerted to an "accident" and will watch the process as 911 is called and police, fire/ EMS arrive to treat and extricate the victims of the accident. The County coroner will be called for two deceased students.

The "intoxicated" driver will be taken into custody and arrested on DUI charges.

Students will then assemble in the high school gym and will be taught about the negative effects of alcohol and drugs, and what can happen when people drink and drive. This will include arrests, court costs and fees, as well as job limitations caused by having a DUI conviction. It also will discuss the damage an incident can cause to the community, family and driver when a DUI results in fatalities. There will be a guest speaker who will give a presentation on what it's like to lose loved ones due to a drunk-driving accident.

Next, after a lunch break, kids will attend the mock "trial" of the arrested driver. That involves the district attorney laying the foundation of the "case" and suggesting a sentence for the defendant. The presiding judge will finish the trial by determining a sentence and costs.

There will be a Q&A session so that students can ask agency representatives questions about anything they witnessed during the day's experience. Kids will be able to see the vehicles and gear required of the crash scene and can ask representatives more about their job duties.

Finally, there will be a "safety" fair on the football field for the younger grades with an opportunity for the kids to look at, touch and sit in emergency vehicles as well as speak with law enforcement officers, fire/EMS personnel, CareFlight crew, Forest Service and BLM representatives.

Norwood Fire Chief John Bockrath said more than 200 people will be witnessing the mock crash. The community is invited, especially parents who have a student attending the event.

Preferred seating will be given to those from the school communities.

Bockrath said the mock crash is an important exercise. According to Freedom from Chemical Dependency surveys among high school students, alcohol is the top abused substance.

Bockrath said it's important to note, though, that the actual percentage of students who abuse alcohol is smaller than the perception of those who do. Still, he said the mock crash would be a valuable lesson for all.

"This event is meant to show our young people the enduring effects from making a single bad decision," he said. "The impacts of getting behind the wheel intoxicated are felt beyond just the immediate people involved and last a lifetime."