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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **KDOT initiative aims to lower fatalities in Sedgwick County**

TOPEKA – Sedgwick County and the Wichita metro area are garnering attention for something no one wants to celebrate – some of the highest traffic fatalities in the state. During the summer of 2022, Sedgwick County safety advocates and law enforcement will be working to turn that around with the public awareness campaign, “Drive Safe Sedgwick.”

Between 2016 and 2020, Sedgwick County recorded 305 traffic-related deaths and more than 900 suspected serious injuries – many considered “potentially avoidable crashes,” according to Chris Bortz, Assistant Bureau Chief of Transportation Safety for the Kansas Department of Transportation.

According to KDOT data, Sedgwick County’s 64 traffic fatalities in 2020 were the highest number of fatalities of any county in the state. In fact, Bortz said it also ranks as one of the highest in the Midwest when compared to counties of similar sizes. “Buckling up costs you nothing,” Bortz said. “Not buckling up could cost you everything. Buckle up for every trip, every time.”

According to Bortz, 23% of all fatality crashes in Sedgwick County involved alcohol. And between 2017 and 2018, over 41% of all passengers in Sedgwick County fatalities were not wearing seat belts.

“Now is the time to make a change for the better,” Bortz said. “It’s time to start a dialogue with your loved ones about safe driving.”

Sedgwick County residents can visit the website - <https://kansasdrivetozero.com/drivesafesedgwick/> - to learn about vehicle safety. The website emphasizes seat belt use among all passengers, not driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol, not texting/being distracted and obeying speed limits.

KDOT’s “Drive Safe Sedgwick” campaign is funded by federal traffic safety funds administered by the agency. The public awareness initiative runs concurrently with a media campaign reminding motorists they can be fined or jailed for certain traffic violations.

For more information about safe driving, visit [www.KTSRO.org](http://www.KTSRO.org).

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