



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
DEB MILLER, SECRETARY

KATHLEEN SEBELIUS, GOVERNOR

PETE BODYK, CHIEF

March 15, 2006

06-065

For more information, contact:

Chris Hess  
KDOT Bureau of Traffic Safety  
(785) 296-3756  
or  
Neal Thurman  
Corporate Communications Group  
(913) 451-2990

### **Friends Don't Let Friends Drive Drunk This St. Patrick's Day**

*Don't Depend on Dumb Luck—Designate a Sober Driver Before the Party Begins*

Many Kansans will celebrate St. Patrick's Day with a wee bit of spirits. Others will have more than a wee bit. And that fact has made the evening of St. Patrick's Day one of the most dangerous to be on the road, particularly this year when the holiday falls on a Friday.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), in 2004, 48 percent of all traffic fatalities that occurred from the evening of St. Patrick's Day to the early hours of the following morning involved drivers with alcohol in their system. Of those fatalities, a vast majority were crashes where the driver's BAC was .08 or higher – above the legal limit in all states.

That's why the Bureau of Traffic Safety of the Kansas Department of Transportation has announced they are joining forces with other federal, state and local highway safety advocates and law enforcement officials across the nation to remind all of those who plan on consuming alcohol during St. Patrick's Day festivities this year to act responsibly by designating their sober drivers before the parties begin.

*(more)*

“St. Patrick’s Day has become a big night out for many Americans—particularly among young adults. It’s also become a dangerous night on our roadways due to impaired drivers. Since St. Patrick’s Day falls on Friday this year, we are working hard to remind everyone that *Friends Don’t Let Friends Drive Drunk*,” said Pete Bodyk, Chief of the Bureau of Traffic Safety. “Whether you are meeting a few friends at the local pub after work or attending a big St. Patrick’s Day party, if you are going to drink, don’t drive.”

Designating a sober driver and not letting friends drive while impaired are just two of several simple steps to help avoid a tragic crash or arrest for impaired driving. Other important tips include:

- If you’re impaired, call a taxi, use mass transit or call a sober friend or family member to get you home safely.
- Report impaired drivers to law enforcement.
- Always buckle up—it’s your best defense against an impaired driver.

Impaired driving is one of America’s deadliest problems. In 2004, more than 15,000 people died in highway crashes involving a driver or motorcycle operator with alcohol in their system. Of those, nearly 13,000 were in crashes where the BAC was .08 or higher.

“Driving impaired or riding with someone who is impaired is simply not worth the risk,” said Bodyk. “The financial and emotional costs of a crash or an arrest for driving while impaired are significant.”

Don’t depend on dumb luck this St. Patrick’s Day. Designate your sober driver before the party begins.

###