

NEWS RELEASE

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Buzzed Driving is Drunk Driving

Don't depend on dumb luck—designate a sober driver before the party begins

For many Americans, St. Patrick's Day has become a popular night out to celebrate with friends and family. Unfortunately, because of the large volume of impaired drivers, this night out has also become very dangerous. Last year on St. Patrick's Day, nearly half (44 percent) of the 105 drivers and motorcyclists involved in the nation's fatal crashes had a blood alcohol content (BAC) of .08 or above.

That's why the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) is joining forces with federal, state, and local highway safety and law enforcement officials to remind all those who plan to celebrate during the St. Patrick's Day festivities to drink responsibly.

"Whether you are meeting a few friends at the local bar after work or attending a parade or celebration in your community, if you plan on using alcohol, never drive while impaired," said Pete Bodyk, chief of KDOT's Bureau of Traffic Safety. "Simply put, *Buzzed Driving is Drunk Driving.*"

Impaired driving is one of America's deadliest problems. In 2006, nationally, 42,642 people were killed in motor vehicle crashes. Out of that number 13,470 people were killed in traffic crashes that involved at least one driver or motorcyclist with a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of .08 or higher. In Kansas during 2006, 108 persons died in alcohol-related crashes, which represent 23 percent of all traffic fatalities in the state.

"Too often, law enforcement officers statewide see the deadly ramifications of those who choose to drink and drive. Too many lives are lost in impaired driving crashes every year, which is one reason why the Kansas Highway Patrol has zero tolerance for impaired driving," said Patrol Superintendent Colonel Terry Maple. "Please celebrate responsibly. If you choose to drink and drive, you will be arrested."

Bodyk said, "Driving impaired or riding with someone who is impaired is simply not worth the risk. Not only do you risk killing yourself or someone else, but the trauma and financial costs of a crash or an arrest for driving while impaired can be really significant."

For more information, please visit www.StopImpairedDriving.org.