



# KANSAS

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## KDOT urges teens to keep prom night special

As the time of high school proms draw near, the Kansas Department of Transportation reminds young motorists to keep their night special and not drink and drive.

“Young people look forward to prom night with anticipation, and those of us who are a little older remember the event with nostalgia,” states Pete Bodyk, Chief of the Bureau of Traffic Safety for KDOT. “Regrettably, prom night is synonymous with drinking for some people. We urge people attending proms to keep their night special and avoid a potential nightmare by drinking and driving.”

In 2004, 51 Kansans aged 15-18 died and almost 6,000 were injured in alcohol-related traffic crashes. Another 2,300 teens die each year in alcohol-related crashes throughout the United States. A majority of those deaths occur in the spring when prom and graduation ceremonies occur.

Consequences are serious for teenagers who are caught drinking and driving, or who are caught with alcohol in their possession.

Kansas passed a Zero Tolerance law for underage drinking and driving in 1997. The law makes it illegal for anyone under 21 to operate a motor vehicle with a blood alcohol content (BAC) of .02 or above (the threshold for adults is .08). For individuals under 200 pounds bodyweight, just one drink leads to a BAC of .02. The full range of BAC based on bodyweight and the number of drinks consumed is available at: <http://www.drunkdrivingdefense.com/general/bac.htm>

The law stipulates that first offenders have their driving privileges suspended, then restricted for a more prolonged period. Fines also can be imposed. Penalties are more severe for repeat offenders or for those with a BAC exceeding .08. In addition, rates for auto insurance can double or even triple after an underage conviction.

Police departments and sheriff’s offices are collaborating to ensure safe driving, and communities, throughout Kansas in anticipation of prom nights. They are monitoring prom schedules, and many have indicated they will establish special patrols to detect impaired drivers on prom nights.

“We support the efforts of the law enforcement community to keep our teenagers safe and to make prom memorable for all the right reasons,” Bodyk said.

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