

## NEWS RELEASE

**MEDIA EVENT PHOTOS AVAILABLE:**

<http://picasaweb.google.com/KDOT.OverTheLimit.UnderArrest/KDOTOverTheLimitUnderArrestMediaEvent82009?feat=directlink>

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### **KDOT Event Illustrates the High Price of Drunk Driving** Major Enforcement Effort Seeks to Save Lives

**WICHITA, Kan.** – Kansas law is clear: If you drive drunk, you will see the inside of a jail cell. State and local law enforcement and traffic safety officials emphasized that point at a media event Aug. 20 at the Sedgwick County Jail.

The event featured a demonstration of the jail intake process, led by Sedgwick County Sheriff Robert Hinshaw, to give Kansas motorists something sobering to think about before they get behind the wheel.

Other featured speakers included District Court Judge Phillip Journey, who described the penalties called for in the law; and Kansas Traffic Safety Resource Prosecutor Karen Wittman, who refuted the widespread urban legends that claim there are ways to “beat the system.”

“It’s not a question of whether you will be taken into a custody; it’s only a question of how long you’ll be there,” said Journey, who helped enhance the current Kansas DUI laws as a state senator before becoming a judge.

The financial impacts are considerable, he added.

Judge Journey said despite widespread efforts, many drivers remain unaware of the full impact a DUI conviction can have on their lives. He said the penalties for DUI violations are significant and unavoidable. In addition to jail time, convicted drivers face tens of thousands of dollars in fines, court costs, insurance rate increases and more.

This information can be made available in alternative accessible formats upon request.

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“You can expect car insurance rates to at least double,” Journey said, citing a study by J.D. Power and Associates. Fines, court costs, attorney’s fees, towing and impoundment fees, electronic home monitoring, substance abuse treatment, and installation of an ignition interlock device are additional costs that can amount to tens of thousands of dollars in total. Then there are the social consequences.

“You have to disclose this arrest to potential employers, and in most workplaces, failure to disclose is grounds for dismissal,” Journey said. “Your arrest becomes a matter of public record; friends, family and employers will find out, and probably fairly soon.”

Wittman discussed the common misconceptions, or “urban legends,” that abound with regard to DUI prosecutions. The bottom line: There is no way to “beat the system.”

“There’s only one way to beat a DUI, and that’s to use a designated sober driver,” Wittman said.

Hinshaw focused on how widespread the drunk driving problem remains. Kansas law enforcement takes drunk driving very seriously because of the unacceptable toll it takes on lives and property. In 2008, there were 3,366 alcohol-related crashes, resulting in 131 alcohol-related fatalities and nearly 2,000 alcohol-related injuries across the state.

“In law enforcement, we all take impaired driving very seriously because of the tremendous toll it takes on lives and property,” he said. “Drunk driving is no accident, and it will not be dealt with lightly. During this special enforcement effort, we’ll have additional deputies out on the street watching for impaired drivers.”

Hinshaw said DUI cases make up a substantial portion of his county jail population.

“In the 24 hours preceding this event, we had 104 people arrested and jailed here in Sedgwick County, and 20 percent were for DUI or DUI-related offenses, such as driving on a suspended license,” he said.

The Kansas Highway Patrol also strongly supports the enforcement effort. “Not only is driving while impaired a reckless and sometimes fatal choice, it is a crime that will have serious long-term consequences,” said Colonel Terry Maple, Superintendent of the Kansas Highway Patrol. “The Patrol is determined to combat driving or riding while impaired through zero-tolerance enforcement. If you are caught driving while impaired, you will be arrested.”

Kansas law enforcement agencies are teaming up with law enforcement and traffic safety advocates across the nation from Aug. 21 through the Labor Day holiday in a crackdown on impaired driving. The national campaign, organized by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), combines high-visibility enforcement with heightened public awareness efforts. The message is simple: If you’re over the limit, you’re under arrest.

For more information, visit [www.StopImpairedDriving.org](http://www.StopImpairedDriving.org).

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