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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Don't let green beer lead to an orange jumpsuit this St. Patrick's Day**

#### *Designate a sober driver before the party begins*

**TOPEKA** – Drunk driving in Kansas means jail time, so people who get carried away with green beer just might find themselves wearing an orange jumpsuit the morning after. That's why KDOT is urging the public to help keep the streets safe this St. Patrick's Day by drinking responsibly and designating a sober driver before heading to the local parade or pub.

“Celebrating St. Patrick's Day can be a lot of fun, but it can also take a serious and tragic turn,” said Deb Miller, Kansas Secretary of Transportation. “That's why KDOT and state and local law enforcement treat drunk driving so seriously, with appropriate penalties – most notably jail time and fines.”

Nationally, statistics from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration show that over the past five years, 851 people lost their lives in motor vehicle crashes during the St. Patrick's Day holiday. Of those fatalities, 327 were killed in crashes that involved a drunk driver or motorcycle operator with a blood alcohol concentration of .08 or higher.

In Kansas, drunk driving crashes spiked in 2006 to the highest level seen in a decade, accounting for 4.9 percent of all crashes. That came after three consecutive years of steady declines. Drunk driving crashes dipped slightly in 2007, the last year for which statistics are available.

*(more)*

While accounting for 4.7 percent of all crashes in 2007, drunk driving was a factor in 8.5 percent of all injury crashes and 28.8 percent of all fatalities. Drunk driving crashes claimed 118 lives in Kansas in 2007 and 1,150 lives in the decade 1997-2007.

In addition to jail – and the possibility of injuring or killing yourself and others – drunk driving also means an arrest record, hefty fines, legal costs and a license suspension.

For a safe St. Patrick's celebration, KDOT recommends the following:

- Plan a safe way home before your celebrations begin.
- If you plan to get a ride home with someone else, designate a sober driver before any drinking begins.
- If you're impaired, use a taxi, call a sober friend or family member, or use public transportation so you are sure to get home safely.
- Use a Safe Ride program; simply call the program in your area:
  - Pittsburg State University – 620-719-0135
  - Washburn University – 785-267-3777
  - Wichita State University – 316-461-7433
  - Ft. Hays State University – 785-621-2580
  - Emporia State University – 620-343-8310
  - Kansas State University – 785-539-0480
  - University of Kansas – 785-864-7233
- If you know someone who is about to drive or ride their motorcycle while impaired, take their keys and help them make other arrangements to safely get to where they are going.

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

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