KDOT Reports Crashes Down, Fatalities Up

In late April, the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) released its 2004 crash statistics. The overall number of vehicle crashes decreased from 74,993 in 2003 to 73,997 in 2004, a difference of 1,021 or one percent.

Alcohol-related crash numbers were down from 3,442 in 2003 to 3,321 (3.5 percent) in 2004 but fatalities were up. Of the 3,321 alcohol-related crashes, 94 were fatal and killed 111 Kansans; 1,427 were physical injury crashes that injured 1,996 Kansans leaving 258 with disabling injuries. In 2003, there were 89 fatal crashes and 97 fatalities; 1,524 injury crashes injured 2,287 Kansans leaving 361 disabled.

Sedgwick County had the most fatalities at 16, followed by Johnson County with 11. In 2003, Sedgwick County had four fatalities and Johnson County had seven. Next in line was Cowley County with six fatalities; Jefferson and Montgomery counties each had five fatalities in 2004.

The top ten Kansas counties reporting alcohol-related crashes were (2003 placement and numbers are in parentheses):

1. Sedgwick 629 (#1 582)
2. Johnson 484 (#2 449)
3. Wyandotte 271 (#3 348)
4. Douglas 208 (#4 247)
5. Shawnee 185 (#5 219)
6. Riley 94 (#6 87)
7. Leavenworth 76 (#8 77)
8. Lyon 69 (not on list 64)
9. Ellis 60 (not on list 40)
10. Crawford 58 (#10 72)

Reno and Saline counties dropped out of the top ten this year; new to the group are Ellis and Lyon counties.

Other counties with 20 or more alcohol-related crashes in 2004 are listed below. An asterisk indicates that the county is new to the list this year. Those that dropped off the list this year are Ellis, Lyon and Pottawatomie.

Allen 20 (16)*
Atchison 36 (22)
Barton 25 (36)
Brown 20 (20)
Butler 47 (53)
Cherokee 45 (34)
Cowley 52 (43)
Dickinson 25 (25)
Finney 48 (53)
Ford 36 (59)
Franklin 20 (18)*
Geary 22 (17)*

Harvey 27 (25)
Jackson 20 (21)
Jefferson 26 (31)
Labette 25 (32)
Neosho 20 (31)
Montgomery 49 (34)
Osage 27 (31)
Saline 50 (85)
Seward 35 (29)
Sumner 22 (24)

The mangled remains of a sport utility vehicle driven by an under age drunk driver.

Olathe, 68 (83); Lenexa, 60 (50); Shawnee, 50 (40); Salina, 41 (65). Hays was close behind at number 11 with 40 (23) alcohol-related crashes.

In 2004, 516 youth under the age of 21 were injured in alcohol-related crashes statewide and 21 died. These figures actually decreased from 576 injuries and 24 deaths in 2003. Underage drinking drivers were responsible for 628 crashes in 2004 compared to 617 in 2003 (1.7 percent); 17 died and 283 were injured in 2004 compared to 16 and 265 the previous year.

For additional information about KDOT statistics, visit www.ksdot.org.

Inside This Issue:
- Upcoming Prevention Conferences
- EUDL Grants Awarded
- Safety Partners Recognized
- NHTSA Releases 2004 Data
- Kansas Leadership PSAs
- Labor Day Mobilization
- Drug Impaired Driving
- Teens Address Alcohol Use
- Code Black Student Event
Underage Drinking Prevention Conferences Planned

The Kansas Drunk Driving Prevention Office will host three one-day conferences addressing underage drinking in July and September. All of these seminars are free to attend.

“Saving Young Lives By Taking Action” will be held July 13, at the Airport Hilton in Wichita and again on July 20, at the Holiday Inn Holidome in Topeka. These conferences will provide participants with information and tools they can use in preventing underage drinking in their home communities. Professionals working in healthcare, education, law enforcement, juvenile justice, nonprofit organizations and other interested persons are encouraged to attend. Lunch will be provided.

On September 22, emergency medical services (EMS) professionals are invited to the “Teaming Up to Save Teens” conference in Lawrence at the Holiday Inn Holidome. This conference is designed to train emergency medical technicians, first responders and paramedics in developing/collaborating with other traffic safety partners to conduct programs that educate young people about the risks of underage drinking. Lunch will be provided.

For information about these prevention conferences or to register, please contact the KDDP Office toll free at 1-877-715-3377 or kddpp@ksna.net.

EUDL Grants Awarded

The Kansas Department of Transportation awarded eight grants this spring totaling $103,522 to law enforcement agencies in five communities, two counties and the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks.

Police Departments in Emporia, Lawrence, Overland Park, Salina and Wichita; law enforcement agencies for Riley and Saline counties and Wildlife and Parks used the funds to conduct overtime enforcement of underage drinking laws and education activities during the spring break, prom and graduation season.

Specific community efforts included party patrols, furnishing to minors sting operations and Cops in Shops programs. All of the agencies purchased Viage Verifier CAV-3200 ID scanners to be used in conjunction with grant activities and for future enforcement.

A highlight of the annual Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) Safety Conference is the presentation of People Saving People Awards. This year four awards were presented.

Dawson Grimsley, president of Davis-Moor Auto Group, Wichita, was recognized in the category of Community Leadership. He has championed numerous initiatives over the years targeting seat belt usage, road rage, drinking and driving, railroad crossing safety and illegal use of drugs.

Technical Trooper Ronald L. Knoefel, Kansas Highway Patrol Troop E, Garden City, was recognized in the category of Education and Awareness. During the six and one-half years he has served Troop E, Knoefel has traveled in excess of 150,000 miles taking safe driving messages to all 24 counties in his service area. He has presented more than 3,000 programs on seat belt usage, drinking and driving, safe driving techniques and other programs to a total audience of 92,000 persons.

Dave Corp, law enforcement liaison (LEL) for the KDOT Bureau of Traffic Safety, was recognized in the category of Enforcement and Response. In the two years that Corp has been LEL, enforcement outcomes have grown tremendously. For example, the number of law enforcement agencies participating in the Special Traffic Enforcement Program has increased from 25 in fiscal year 2002 to 62 in fiscal year 2004. Seat belt violations more than doubled in the same time period.

Also in the category of Enforcement and Response, the Overland Park Police Department was recognized for its significant impact on the safety of children commuting to and from school. They have conducted 17 child passenger safety seat checkpoints in and around area schools, resulting in 342 citations and two arrests. They were also the first Kansas law enforcement agency to implement the Click It or Ticket model. Due in part to their efforts, Johnson County has one of the highest seat belt usage rates in the state at 73 percent.

Other People Saving People nominees were Sonic Drive-in, Newton; Briggs Auto Group, Manhattan; Volunteer Lynn Aldrich, Hutchinson; and Editor Ann Charles, Parsons.

The 2005 Transportation Safety Conference was held in Wichita, on May 24 and 25 at the Hyatt-Regency Hotel and Century II Convention Center. Approximately 300 people attended.
United States Transportation Secretary Norman Y. Mineta called the problem of highway traffic deaths a “national epidemic” as the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration released its preliminary report for 2004 data on April 21.

“We are in the midst of a national epidemic,” said Secretary Mineta. “If this many people were to die from any one disease in a single year, Americans would demand a vaccine. The irony is we already have the best vaccine available to reduce the death toll on our highways – safety belts.”

The fatality rate dropped and alcohol-related crashes are down from 2003, yet 42,800 people died on the nation’s roadways in 2004. This figure is up slightly from 42,643 in 2003.

NHTSA’s report also projects the seventh straight increase in motorcycle fatalities with a 7.3 percent increase over 2003. There were 3,661 motorcycle deaths in 2003 and 3,927 in 2004.

In other data released, NHTSA projected the following changes between 2003 and 2004:

- Injuries dropped from 2.9 million to 2.8 million, a decline of 4.6 percent.
- Overall alcohol-related fatalities dropped 2.1 percent from 17,013 to 16,654.
- Passenger car occupant fatalities declined by 2.4 percent and pickup deaths dropped 2.0 percent while sport utility vehicle deaths rose 4.9 percent.

In 2004, 56 percent of occupants killed in passenger vehicles were not wearing safety belts, a rate that was unchanged.

Traffic crashes come at an enormous cost to society, Mineta noted. According to NHTSA’s estimates, highway crashes cost society $230.6 billion a year which equates to about $820 per person.

“Sadly, traffic crashes continue to be the leading cause of death in American children and young adults,” said NHTSA Administrator Jeffrey Runge, M.D. “While seat belt use, at 80 percent, is at an all-time high, we could save thousands more lives each year if everyone buckled up.”

The Kansas Leadership to Keep Children Alcohol Free has released a public service announcement featuring The Honorable Gary Sebelius, Kansas’ First Gentleman, asking parents to talk with their children about alcohol.

Produced by the Kansas Highway Patrol, the 30 second television spot has been distributed statewide with support from the Kansas Association of Broadcasters.

The message is simple: talking about underage drinking begins at home. *Talk to Your Child About Alcohol* is a free booklet for parents from the Kansas Family Partnership.

An initiative to prevent the use of alcohol by children ages 9 to 15, the Kansas group works under the auspices of Leadership to Keep Children Alcohol Free. This unique coalition of Governors’ spouses, Federal agencies, and public/private organizations nationwide was founded in 1999 and is the only national effort that focuses on alcohol use in this age group.

To receive a copy of *Talk to Your Child About Alcohol*, visit the RADAR (Regional Alcohol and Drug Awareness Resource) Network at www.kansasfamily.com or call Kansas Family Partnership toll free at 1-800-206-7231.

**Labor Day Mobilization Takes Place Nationwide**

Again this year, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration will conduct its *You Drink & Drive. You Lose.* Labor Day Mobilization to help support law enforcement agencies in their efforts to keep our roadways safe from drunk drivers.

The impaired driving campaign kicks off August 19 and runs through the holiday weekend, ending on September 5. With a simple message for Americans to make the right choice – don’t drink and drive – the campaign’s goal is to enhance national awareness about the deadly toll of alcohol-related crashes and to generate a national urgency to stop the senseless killing and injury caused by drinking and driving.

Kansas law enforcement agencies representing 32 Impaired Driving Deterrence Programs (IDDP) and up to 65 Special Traffic Enforcement Programs (STEP) – both funded by the Kansas Department of Transportation – will conduct sobriety checkpoints and saturation patrols during the *You Drink & Drive. You Lose.* Labor Day Mobilization.
Teens Reach Out Locally to Address Alcohol Use

Kansas teens are creative when it comes to approaching their peers and others about the risks of underage alcohol use.

Take for instance the 2004 Youth Leadership Butler (YLB) Class who dramatized the effects of substance abuse for sixth grade students in Butler County. The “Flatliner” program took place at the First Baptist Church in Augusta on April 27.

With a setup similar to a haunted house, approximately 1,000 elementary school students from nine districts traveled through a series of mock scenes that included getting ready for the “party,” the actual “party,” an alcohol poisoning, a hospital emergency room and a funeral. The YLB class members and students from local SADD chapters interpreted each scene and law enforcement officers talked with the sixth graders about what they had witnessed while providing take-home information for students and their parents.

Norwich High School SADD chapter held a community educational forum. “Students and Adults Declaring Da’ Truth” was held March 23, in the Eagles Nest Gymnasium. The program included presentations by the DUI Victim Center of Kansas and Kansas City Chiefs professional football player Kendall Gammon.

The Future Farmers of America at Field Kindley High School in Coffeyville staged their two part “Ghost Out” – a mock drunk driving crash and funeral – March 16-17. This was part of the group’s leadership program.

In the scenario, a drunk driver drove his car into a vehicle with three teenage victims. The driver in the teen car was “killed” and his “funeral” was held the next day.

Many other high schools in communities around the state also staged mock crashes this spring to raise awareness about the risks of underage drinking and drunk driving.

If you would like to plan a similar event in your community, contact the Kansas Drunk Driving Prevention Office, toll free at 1-877-715-3377, for free information and planning guides.

During the Flatliner program, student actors portray a teen drinking party where a young girl blacks out from alcohol poisoning.

Any Drug Can Impair Driving

As the battle against drinking and driving continues, it is important not to lose sight of other substances that can impair the ability to drive. Prescription drugs, over-the-counter drugs and illegal drugs can all have devastating effects on safe driving.

Drugs can affect the central nervous system in many different ways. They can cause blurred vision, altered perceptions, extreme drowsiness or mania and hallucinations, and totally change a person’s internal clock (bodily operation). All of these symptoms can result from any type of drug, legal or illegal. Drugs alter brain function, which in turn results in changes in both muscle control and nerve function.

Over-the-counter drugs like cough syrups, allergy remedies and cold tablets generally contain antihistamines, alcohol, codeine and other chemical compounds that can impair driving skills.

Cocaine, amphetamines, ephedrine and caffeine all stimulate the central nervous system. Stimulants in small amounts generally make a tired person feel more alert, but repeated use often results in a loss of coordination. A fast internal clock is often observed in the user.

Tranquilizers and sleeping pills (depressants), such as Valium, Dalmane, Thorazine, Benzodiazepines and barbiturates (commonly referred to as “downers or sedative-hypnotics”) depress the central nervous system and are often used to relieve tension and anxiety. These drugs produce relaxation, drowsiness, and impaired balance and coordination. A slow internal clock can be observed in the user.

Hallucinogens, such as LSD and PCP, distort judgment and reality. These drugs can cause confusion and panic, as well as severe mental problems resulting in strange and violent behavior. This category can mimic both the stimulant and depressant categories. A distorted internal clock can be observed in the user.

Another mind-altering drug is marijuana. Marijuana affects reflexes, decision-making and the ability to maintain speed and proper distance between vehicles. In addition, driving becomes a very dangerous task due to judgment, depth perception, and the ability to maintain short and long term attention spans. A distorted internal clock is observed in the user with this drug category.

For more information about drugs and their effects on drivers, visit the Citizens Against Drug Impaired Drivers (C.A.N.D.I.D.) website at www.candid.org or contact C.A.N.D.I.D. toll free at 1-800-929-9077.
The third annual Code Black event for Sedgwick County high school students was held April 7, at Andale High School and Maize High School.

With a total of 3,400 students in attendance at the two presentations, Miss Kansas 2004 Megan Bushell opened the event by telling the teens that life is about choices. “Making positive decisions is critical to achieving your dreams,” she said. “It’s your choice.”

“This is about decision-making,” added Sgt. Rusty James of the Lenexa Police Department as he took the stage to introduce the keynote speaker. As supervisor of the Lenexa, Kansas, Police Department Traffic Division, Sgt. James responded to the wreck that killed Susan Lee’s son Jeff. Jeff Lee and Sgt. James’ son Jeff were best friends. Jeff James was supposed to have been in the car that deadly night.

Taking the stage, Susan Lee, showed the teens two pieces of paper, her son’s birth certificate and his death certificate. On the stage were two large photographs, one of Jeff and the other of his wrecked blue Ford Mustang. Jeff was 19 years old when he died in a drunk driving crash on November 16, 1998.

It was a Monday evening and Jeff Lee was planning to join his friends Jeff James, Pat, and Brian to watch football and drink beer at Pat’s apartment. As Lee and her son exchanged hugs and “I love yous” before he left she told him, “Be careful!” He replied, “Don’t worry Mom; nothing’s going to happen to me.”

Later in the evening Jeff called his mom to see if she was watching the game. They talked and laughed. “He hung up and I never talked to my son again,” Lee said.

“Jeff left the apartment with Brian to go to another friend’s house;” she continued. “He was speeding in excess of 100 mph and lost control of the car. The car flipped end over end three or four times before hitting a telephone pole. Jeff died upon impact. Every bone in his face was broken.”

Both Brian and Jeff were ejected from the vehicle; neither had been wearing a seatbelt. Jeff landed in the middle of the highway. Lee said, “Brian crawled from the side of the road and lay on top of Jeff to protect him from the traffic.”

“At 2 a.m. on November 17th,” Susan continued, “the doorbell rang. I thought, Jeff must have lost his key but Sgt. James was at the door.”

He said ‘Susan, I need to talk to you. There’s been an accident and Jeff won’t be coming home.”

She said, “What do you mean. Where’s my son?”

He said, “I’m so sorry, Jeff is dead and he’s not coming home.”

“This nightmare is never going to end. I live with it every day,” Lee said.

Finally, Lee told the students, “Jeff made three bad decisions that night. First, he drank. Second, he got behind the wheel of the car. And third, he did not wear his seatbelt.” Lee was told by Sgt. James that the crash was survivable with a seatbelt.

“That was the most tragic day of my life, to lose my son, my baby boy,” Lee said. “I’m here to try to make a difference and reach out to each one of you. You’re not invincible. Don’t let it happen to your parents, to your friends.”

“I can’t bring Jeff back, but I can ask you to listen, hear the message. Please don’t drink and drive, and use your seatbelt.”

In closing, Sgt James added, “Decisions you make today will affect the rest of your life. We want you to make good decisions.”

In addition to Andale and Maize High Schools, students from the following schools were in attendance: Andover, Bluestem, Flint Hills, Valley Center, Wichita East and Wichita West. Each student received a Code Black 3 T-shirt and goodie bag for attending the event.

The following sponsors were recognized for their assistance with Code Black 3: Sedgwick County Sheriff’s Office, Andale High School, Creative Design Tees, Davis-Moore Auto Group, Maize High School, Kansas Drunk Driving Prevention Office, Via Christi Health Advantage, Kansas Department of Transportation and the Kansas State Trooper’s Association.
The KDDP Newsletter is a quarterly publication of the Kansas Drunk Driving Prevention Office, a program of the Kansas Department of Transportation.

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KANSAS Drunk Driving Prevention OFFICE

Upcoming Events

July 2005
13  Saving Young Lives by Taking Action Seminar (Wichita)
20  Saving Young Lives by Taking Action Seminar (Topeka)
25-28  SRO/DARE State Conference (Wichita)

August 2005
7-9  Kansas Youth Leadership Summit (Rock Springs Ranch)
18-20  EUDL/OJJDP National Conference (Tucson, AZ)
19  You Drink & Drive. You Lose. National Mobilization Begins (through September 5)

September 2005
9-18  Kansas State Fair (Hutchinson)
15  Johnson County Youth Summit (Overland Park)
22  Teaming Up to Save Teens - EMS Seminar (Lawrence)
29  MADD National Conference Begins (Washington D.C., through October 2)

Web Resources

Kansas Department of Transportation  
www.ksdot.org

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration  
www.nhtsa.dot.gov

Alcoholic Beverage Control  
www.ksrevenue.org/abc.htm

National Commission Against Drunk Driving  
www.ncadd.com

Mothers Against Drunk Driving  
www.madd.org

Students Against Destructive Decisions  
www.saddonline.com

There’s No Excuse for Driving Drunk

A program of the Kansas Department of Transportation

Safe not sorry

A program of the Kansas Department of Transportation