

NEWS RELEASE

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July 4th too often ends in tragedy

Expect zero tolerance for impaired driving this holiday

TOPEKA, Kan. — This summer, don't let your Fourth of July end in an arrest – or a fatal crash. Make smart decisions. Plan ahead, so you can assure a safe way home. Whether you've had way too many or just one too many, it's not worth the risk.

Every 39 minutes and nearly 40 times a day, someone in the United States dies in an impaired driving-related crash, according to research by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. In 2006, during the Fourth of July holiday period, there were 659 traffic-related fatalities. Out of that number, 37 percent involved a driver or motorcyclist with a blood alcohol content (BAC) of .08 or higher.

“Too many people still don't understand that alcohol, drugs and driving just don't mix,” said Pete Bodyk, chief of KDOT's Bureau of Traffic Safety. “Impaired driving is no accident – nor is it a victimless crime. Too many lives are being lost and we need everyone's help to stop it.”

Driving with a BAC of .08 or higher is illegal in every state. Yet too many people still ignore the law. According to the FBI's Uniform Crime Report, more than 1.4 million people were arrested for driving under the influence during 2006. Driving impaired or riding with someone who is impaired is not worth the risk. The consequences are serious and real. 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 significant. That's no way to celebrate the July 4th holiday.

“People who break the law face jail time, the loss of their driver's license, higher insurance rates and dozens of other unanticipated expenses,” said Bodyk.

Drunk driving is one of America's deadliest problems. In 2006, more than 13,000 people died in highway crashes involving a driver or motorcycle operator who was impaired.

Bodyk said that much of the tragedy from drunk driving could be prevented with a few simple precautions before going out to celebrate:

- Plan ahead: Whenever you plan on consuming alcohol, designate your sober driver before going out and give that person your keys.
- If you're impaired, call a taxi, use mass transit or call a sober friend or family member to get you home safely.
- Promptly report to law enforcement any drivers on the roadway who appear to be drunk.
- If you know someone who is about to drive or ride while impaired, take his or her keys and help make other arrangements to reach a destination.
- Always buckle up, day and night – it's still your best defense against other impaired drivers.

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