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Don't let impaired driving bring a tragic end to 2020

The year 2020 has had its ups and downs. Do not make it worse by driving impaired. The Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) reminds everyone the holidays are a time when impaired driving crashes and fatalities are typically at their highest.

KDOT is raising awareness of the dangers with its high-visibility holiday impaired driving campaign, "Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over." The campaign, which extends from Dec. 18 to Jan. 1, 2021, spotlights the large number of crashes and fatalities directly related to impaired driving around the holidays. According to the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), 839 people nationwide lost their lives in traffic crashes involving an impaired driver in December 2018.

"I encourage all Kansans to drive smart and stay safe," said KDOT Secretary Julie Lorenz. "Enjoy the holidays, but please remember to drive responsibly and remind others to do the same."

In Kansas, 2018 statistics draw attention to the sharp rise in both impaired driving crashes and fatalities. Between Dec. 21-25 of that year, the state recorded 572 alcohol-related crashes and five fatalities. Then between Dec. 28-31, Kansas recorded an additional 299 crashes and two fatalities related to impaired driving.

"During the Christmas and New Year's Day holiday periods in 2018 alone, there were more impaired-driving-related fatalities in the U.S. than during any other holiday period that year," said KDOT Traffic Safety Manager Chris Bortz. "In 2018, one person was killed every 50 minutes by an impaired driver on our nation's roads."

KDOT suggests designating a sober driver before traveling or to use public transportation. Many communities also offer sober ride programs. Make sure and prevent others from driving impaired: take away their keys, provide alternative transportation or report them to law enforcement.

“Consuming any substance that impairs your judgment – alcohol, drugs or combination thereof – makes you a risk to every other driver and could lead to arrest,” Bortz said.

The “Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over” campaign is funded by federal traffic safety funds administered by KDOT. For more information about traveling safety this holiday season, visit www.KTSRO.org.

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