



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **ALCOHOL-RELATED DEATHS DECLINE BUT DRINKING AND DRIVING STILL ACCOUNTS FOR ONE-THIRD OF ALL FATALITIES**

*Public Safety Issues Latest Impaired Driving Facts Report*

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ST. PAUL — Alcohol-related deaths in Minnesota decreased to 163 in 2008, an all-time low. But that figure represents 36 percent of the 455 traffic deaths, matching historical trends. These are two of the key findings from the [Minnesota Motor Vehicle Impaired Driving Facts 2008](#), the Department of Public Safety's annual summary of impaired driving which was released today.

Final 2009 alcohol-related crash statistics and DWI arrest numbers will be available in spring 2010.

"Impaired driving continues to account for at least one-third of all traffic deaths in Minnesota," says Cheri Marti, Department of Public Safety (DPS) director of the Office of Traffic Safety.

"Progress has been made, but much work remains. We are taking concrete steps to stop or prevent impaired drivers and their tragic consequences."

Details of the report include:

- 4,245 alcohol-related crashes occurred in 2008 resulting in 163 deaths and 2,896 injuries.
- 35,794 motorists were arrested for DWI, translating to 98 DWI arrests a day.
- In Minnesota, alcohol-related deaths decreased by 14 percent (190 in 2007, 163 in 2008).
- Nationally, alcohol-related deaths decreased by 19 percent (17,036 in 2007, 13,846 in 2008).

To further combat impaired driving in 2010, enhanced DWI patrols will focus on the counties of: Anoka, Dakota, Hennepin, Olmsted, Otter Tail, Ramsey, Rice, St. Louis, Scott, Sherburne, Stearns, Washington and Wright. These 13 counties accounted for more than one-half of the state's total alcohol-related deaths and serious injuries during 2006–2008.

Additionally, Governor Tim Pawlenty has proposed that all convicted DWI offenders be required to have ignition interlocks installed in their vehicle or face a longer revocation period.

The proposal also would lower the alcohol concentration limit from 0.02 to .015 for enhanced administrative penalties.

—MORE—

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A current statewide interlock pilot program is active with nearly 600 participants. DWI offenders can visit [www.MinnesotaIgnitionInterlock.org](http://www.MinnesotaIgnitionInterlock.org) to learn how to participate.

The report also found that during 2004–2008, Minnesota averaged 179 alcohol-related traffic deaths and 37,524 DWIs annually. Seventy-eight percent of drinking drivers killed were not wearing seat belts. Males accounted for 74 percent of all DWIs — down from 79 percent in 2000 and reflecting a steady climb of female DWI offenders.

Motorists ages 20–29 represented 43 percent of DWI arrests. One in 12 of the DWI arrests were motorists under age 21. Sixty percent of violators were first-time offenders, yet 14,405 (40 percent) had two or more DWIs on record. The average alcohol concentration among first-time offenders was 0.146.

In all, one in eight Minnesota drivers — 523,891 — has a DWI on record, and one in 18 have two or more DWIs. DPS reports 41 percent of those who incur one violation will incur a second DWI.

The report shows that 82 percent of motorists arrested for DWI resulted in a criminal conviction for driving while impaired by alcohol. The top counties for DWI conviction rates were: Marshall (100 percent), Norman (96 percent), Otter Tail (95 percent), Lac Qui Parle (94 percent), Brown (94 percent), and Stevens (93 percent). The counties with the lowest conviction rate were Washington (72 percent), Renville (75 percent), Ramsey (76 percent), and Anoka, Dakota and Roseau (78 percent each).

Nearly half (49 percent) of the DWI arrests were made on Saturdays and Sundays. The Twin Cities' metro area and the 80-county greater Minnesota each accounted for about one-half of all 2008 DWI arrests. Yet two-thirds of the 163 total alcohol-related deaths in Minnesota occurred outside the Twin Cities' metro — Greater Minnesota accounted for 319 total traffic deaths, of which 107 (34 percent) were impaired driving-related.

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**Editor's Note:** Find *Impaired Driving Facts 2008* online here:  
[http://www.dps.state.mn.us/OTS/crashdata/impaired\\_driving.asp](http://www.dps.state.mn.us/OTS/crashdata/impaired_driving.asp)

Find Minnesota county-by-county facts showing deaths, injuries, DWI arrests and residents with DWI offenses for the years 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008 —  
<https://mndeptpublicsafety.sharefile.com/d-scad434cc4fa4d51b>