



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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LAW ENFORCEMENT TO ROUND UP IMPAIRED DRIVERS IN END-OF-SUMMER DWI CRACKDOWN

Last Weekends in August Among Deadliest for Alcohol-Related Crashes

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ST. PAUL — Increased DWI enforcement patrols start tonight across Minnesota and the nation and will continue through Labor Day. The Minnesota Department of Public Safety (DPS) Office of Traffic Safety reports the last two weekends in August and Labor Day weekend have been in the top 11 deadliest weekends for alcohol-related crashes over the last three years — resulting in 29 deaths.

Last year in Minnesota, there were 141 alcohol-related traffic deaths, and 279 motorists were seriously injured in alcohol-related crashes. DPS reports enhanced DWI enforcement campaigns have factored in the state's positive trend of fewer alcohol-related deaths in recent years. A similar enforcement effort in 2009 resulted in 1,873 DWI arrests.

“The greatest deterrent to prevent impaired driving is the threat of apprehension,” says Cheri Marti, DPS Office of Traffic Safety director. “The intent of DWI enforcement programs is to prevent the illegal behavior from occurring in the first place and the tragedies that occur as a result.”

In Minnesota, one in seven drivers have a DWI on record, and each year more than 30,000 motorists are arrested for DWI — nearly 33,000 were apprehended in 2009. Consequences for a DWI include loss of license for up to a year, up to \$20,000 in legal costs and heightened insurance rates, and possible jail time.

Law enforcement agencies will combine the enhanced DWI patrols with seat belt enforcement; 75 percent of drinking drivers killed in crashes are also not belted. Minnesota's primary seat belt law requires drivers and passengers in all seating positions — including the back seat — to be buckled up or in the correct child restraint. Law enforcement will stop and ticket unbelted motorists or passengers.

While young adult males continue to be the primary DWI violators, DPS says impaired female drivers are an emerging population, accounting for one-quarter of all DWI arrests, compared to 19 percent a decade ago. Males continue to account for 84 percent of the impaired driving deaths annually.

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Officials encourage motorists to have a plan for a safe and sober ride in advance of drinking: designate a sober driver, use a taxi cab or public transportation, or spend the night at a friend's house.

“A common reason so many drinking drivers find themselves handcuffed is they don't plan for a safe ride and don't want to leave their vehicle at a bar,” says Lt. Eric Roeske of the Minnesota State Patrol. “Retrieving your vehicle in the morning is much more convenient than dealing with the consequences of a DWI.”

The enforcement campaign is supported by a paid media campaign that includes new radio and print ads. The print campaign features the tagline “don't be what you drink” to play off headlines such as “Screwed Driver” and “Beer Mugged” (link to download the creative is below).

The DWI enforcement is a component of the state's core traffic safety initiative, *Toward Zero Deaths (TZD)*. *TZD* focuses on the application of four strategic areas to reduce crashes — education, enforcement, engineering and emergency trauma response. The goal of the program is 400 or fewer deaths by the end of 2010. To-date, there have been 250 traffic deaths in Minnesota.



Editor's Note: Find county-by-county facts of DWI arrests, alcohol-related deaths and serious injuries, a map plotting the alcohol-related deaths, the new DWI enforcement ad campaign and soundclips from today's news conference here:

<https://mndeptpublicsafety.sharefile.com/d/sc60c4473d7c40a69>