



# MEDIA RELEASE

## Traffic Safety Office

Ohio Traffic Safety Office • Tina O'Grady, Administrator  
[www.ohiohighwaysafetyoffice.ohio.gov](http://www.ohiohighwaysafetyoffice.ohio.gov)



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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## Friends Don't Let Friends Drive Drunk This St. Patrick's Day

*Don't Depend on Dumb Luck — Designate a Sober Driver Before the Party Begins*

**COLUMBUS** — As many Ohioans prepare to join in the celebration of the upcoming St. Patrick's Day holiday, the Ohio Department of Public Safety (ODPS) reminds those taking part in the festivities to act responsibly and designate a sober driver before the party begins.

With the March 17 St. Patrick's Day holiday falling mid-week, celebrations are expected to begin this weekend. The St. Patrick's Day holiday has become a popular night out to celebrate with friends and family. Unfortunately, due to the large number of drunk drivers, the night has also become very dangerous.

"ODPS and its partners want everyone to enjoy the St. Patrick's Day holiday, but strongly encourage individuals taking part in the festivities to take the appropriate steps in advance. Impaired driving not only increases your chances of a crash that may cause death or serious injury, but can also lead to trauma and the financial cost of a crash or arrest," said ODPS Director Cathy Collins-Taylor. "If you plan to consume alcohol, take the responsible step of designating a sober driver or making the necessary arrangements to get home safely."

During last year's St. Patrick's Day holiday reporting period, the Patrol made 159 OVI-related arrests during the 24-hour reporting period of 6 a.m. on March 17 through 6 a.m. on March 18, 2009. Four motorists also lost their lives that night – of which all four were OVI-related.

To prevent deaths and injuries, ODPS is partnering with local law enforcement and safety advocates around the state to increase enforcement on Ohio's roads and remind people to plan ahead to designate a sober driver. More than 88 local law enforcement agencies around the state will be conducting more than 2,700 hours of enforcement activity and 1,200 hours of saturation patrols in addition to sobriety checkpoints, funded by federal grants provided through the Ohio Traffic Safety Office (OTSO). The Ohio State Highway Patrol will also have a visible presence on the state's highways.

For bars and establishments, over-serving or serving underage could also mean costly fines, suspension or revocation of their liquor permit. The Ohio Investigative Unit (OIU) and other safety partners have been working to educate motorists and establishment owners of these consequences in advance by passing out St. Patrick's Day materials reminding people of the dangers of driving impaired and that over-serving is against the law.

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ODPS recommends the following easy steps, for a safe St. Patrick's Day:

- Plan a safe way home before the festivities begin;
- Before drinking, please designate a sober driver and leave your car keys at home;
- If you're impaired, use a taxi, call a sober friend or family member, or use public transportation so you are sure to get home safely;
- If you see an impaired driver on the roadway, call law enforcement immediately. Call 1-877-7-PATROL on state highways.
- And remember, if you know someone who is about to drive or ride while impaired, take their keys and help them make other arrangements to get to where they are going safely.
- Always buckle up – it's still your best defense against impaired drivers.
- If you are a bar or establishment owner or employee and have questions about over-serving or other liquor-permit related issues, contact one of OIU's regional offices. Contact information is listed online at: <http://investigativeunit.ohio.gov/> OIU offers free instruction on laws pertaining to the sale and/or consumption of alcohol and tobacco. Agents also cover topics such as false identification, employment of minors, along with penalties for those found in violation.

For more information, visit [www.StopImpairedDriving.org](http://www.StopImpairedDriving.org).

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*ODPS works to reduce alcohol related deaths and injuries and keep Ohio's roads safe through the enforcement efforts of the Ohio Investigative Unit (OIU) which enforces liquor, tobacco and food stamp laws in liquor permit premises and the Ohio State Highway Patrol which enforces traffic laws on the road. In addition to enforcement efforts, OIU also works to educate bar owners and servers about liquor laws, including over-serving. The Ohio Traffic Safety Office (OTSO) coordinates and funds the efforts of DUI Task Forces and grants for local law enforcement and safety partners to combat impaired and unsafe driving. OTSO also promotes educational programs, coalition-building efforts and campaigns focused on highway safety.*