



MEDIA RELEASE

Department of Public Safety

Ohio Department of Public Safety • Thomas P. Charles, Director
www.publicsafety.ohio.gov



John Kasich, Governor

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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 upcoming St. Patrick's Day holiday celebration, the Ohio Department of Public Safety (ODPS) reminds them to plan ahead and designate a sober driver before the party begins.

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.

"We want people to enjoy the St. Patrick's Day holiday, but we encourage them to do so responsibly," said ODPS Director Thomas P. Charles. "It is important to take the appropriate step of designating a sober driver or making the necessary arrangements to get home safely. Don't depend on luck."

During last year's St. Patrick's Day holiday reporting period, the Ohio State Highway Patrol (OSHP), a division of ODPS, made 185 OVI-related arrests during the 24-hour reporting period of 6 a.m. on March 17 through 6 a.m. on March 18, 2011.

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 78 local law enforcement agencies around the state will be conducting more than 2,100 hours of enforcement activity and 1,900 hours of saturation patrols in addition to 15 sobriety checkpoints, funded by federal grants provided through the Office of Criminal Justice Services (OCJS), another division of ODPS. OSHP will also have a visible presence on the state's highways.

"Troopers will be out statewide looking for and removing impaired drivers from our roadways," said Colonel John Born, Patrol superintendent. "Contribute to a safer Ohio by planning ahead to designate a driver and never get behind the wheel after drinking."

For bars and permit holders, over-serving or serving underage customers could also mean costly fines, suspension or revocation of their liquor permit. ODPS' Ohio Investigative Unit (OIU) and other safety partners have been working to educate motorists and permit holders 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.

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

- Plan a safe way home before the festivities begin.
- Before drinking, designate a sober driver and leave your car keys at home.

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- 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 #677 on state highways.
- 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, permit holder 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 <http://www.stopimpaireddriving.org/index-hq.html>

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ODPS works to reduce deaths and injuries and improve the quality of life for Ohioans through the coordinated efforts of its Divisions, which include OSHP, OIU and OCJS. OSHP enforces traffic laws and OIU enforces liquor, tobacco and food stamp laws in liquor permit premises as well as works to educate bar owners and servers about liquor laws, including over-serving. OCJS funds the efforts of OVI Task Forces and other grants for law enforcement to combat impaired and unsafe driving and increase seat belt use. OCJS also promotes educational programs, coalition-building efforts and campaigns for highway safety.