
2019 HOLIDAY DWI MOBILIZATION: PRE-ENFORCEMENT NEWS RELEASE

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CRASH AT A FRIENDS, NOT ON THE ROAD; FRIENDS DON'T LET FRIENDS DRIVE IMPAIRED

Extra DWI Patrols During the Holidays on Polk County and Thief River Falls Roads Nov. 27 – Dec. 28

East Grand Forks, Minn. – A holiday beer with a friend. A glass of wine at a family member's home. One shot for the road. A drink here or there can seem insignificant but one drink can affect a driver's judgement. This holiday season, give the gift of life by choosing a sober ride every time you decide to have even one drink.

To help keep families together this holiday season, the Crookston, East Grand Forks and Thief River Falls Police Departments, along with the Polk County Sheriff's Office will be participating with law enforcement statewide in an extra DWI enforcement campaign running on weekends starting Nov. 27 through Dec. 28.

Planning Ahead

Motorists need to plan ahead for sober rides even when traveling to friends and family's homes for the holidays, not just when going to the bars.

- During 2014 – 2018, 35 people died in drunk driving-related crashes during the holiday DWI extra enforcement period.
- Christmas ranks high in the percentage of drunk driving-related fatalities (23.3 percent) during holidays, behind Labor Day (29.6 percent) and Halloween (26.7 percent) (2013-2017).
- Nearly one out of every four deaths on Minnesota roads is drunk driving-related.
- In the last five years (2014 – 2018), there were 412 drunk driving-related traffic deaths in Minnesota, with 84 people killed in 2018 alone.
- Alcohol-related crashes not only take lives, they change them forever. An average of 331 life-changing injuries (2014-2018) are caused by alcohol-related crashes each year.

“When people head to establishments, knowing they are going to drink, many plan ahead for a sober ride,” said East Grand Forks Chief of Police Michael Hedlund. “Unfortunately, a sober ride home from dinner at a family member or friend's house is not always thought of as much as when people go to bars, but it's just as important. As your guests arrive, ask them about their plans, and if they don't have a plan, get them a ride home or offer them a bed for the night. It's much better to lie in a bed than a coffin.”

The Choice is Yours

The decision to get behind the wheel after drinking is costing too many people their lives. The choice to drive drunk has contributed to 28 deaths on Minnesota roads from the day before Thanksgiving through Dec.30 (2012-2017).

Holiday DWI Arrests (Day before Thanksgiving – Dec. 30)

Year	DWIs
2013	2,556
2014	2,565
2015	2,381
2016	2,271
2017	2,717
Total	12,490

DWI Arrests Year-Round

Year	DWIs
2014	25,392
2015	25,374
2016	24,059
2017	24,862
2018	26,825
Total	126,512

Holiday	Number of DWIs Per Hour (2013-2017)
Halloween	4.0
Fourth of July	3.9
Labor Day	3.8
St. Paddy's Day	3.8
Memorial Day	3.6
Thanksgiving	3.6
New Year's Day	3.3
Super Bowl	3.2
Valentine's Day	3.2
Cinco de Mayo	3.0
Annual Average	2.9
Christmas	2.5

Blackout Wednesday Dangers

Blackout Wednesday (the day before Thanksgiving) is traditionally associated with a night of binge drinking. Many college students are returning home for a night of celebrating with friends and with no work on Thursday, many adults get together after a short work-week.

DWI Consequences

- Loss of license for up to a year, thousands of dollars in costs and possible jail time.
- Repeat DWI offenders, as well as first-time offenders arrested at 0.16 and above alcohol-concentration level, must use [ignition interlock](#) in order to regain legal driving privileges or face at least one year without a driver's license.
- First-time offenders arrested at 0.16 and above are required to use interlock for one year.
- Offenders with three or more offenses are required to use interlock for three to six years, or they will never regain driving privileges.

Speak Up and Plan a Sober Ride

- Plan for a safe ride — designate a sober driver, use a safe, alternative transportation option, or stay at the location of the celebration.
- Speak up – Offer to be a designated driver or be available to pick up a loved one anytime, anywhere. If you see an impaired person about to get behind the wheel, get them a safe ride home.
- Buckle up — the best defense against a drunk driver.

- Report drunk driving — call 911 when witnessing impaired driving behavior. Be prepared to provide location, license plate number and observed dangerous behavior.

The enhanced DWI enforcement campaign is a component of the state's Toward Zero Deaths (TZD) program. The Minnesota departments of Public Safety, Transportation and Health collaborate on improving traffic safety for all. A primary vision of the TZD program is to create a safe driving culture in Minnesota in which motorists support a goal of zero road fatalities by practicing and promoting safe and smart driving behavior. TZD focuses on the application of four strategic areas to reduce crashes – education, enforcement, engineering, and emergency medical and trauma response.

Definitions

- Driving While Impaired (DWI) is a violation for driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Alcohol-related: any evidence of alcohol detected in a driver, pedestrian or bicyclist.
- Impaired-related: any driver, pedestrian or bicyclist with a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of .08 or above.
- Drunk-driving-related: any driver with a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of .08 or above.