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## **DOT, Illinois State Police and Local Law Enforcement Across the State Remind Celebrators to Designate a Sober Driver this St. Patrick's Day**

*Stepped Up Enforcement Designed to Get Drunk Drivers Off the Road*

CHICAGO – As St. Patrick's Day approaches, the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), Illinois State Police and nearly 200 local law enforcement agencies urge motorists to plan a safe ride home and never get behind the wheel after drinking. Now through the March 17th holiday, state and local law enforcement officers across Illinois will have an increased presence to crack down on drunk drivers as part of the Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over campaign.

St. Patrick's Day means many Illinoisans will be celebrating with family and friends at local parades, restaurants and drinking establishments. These celebrations can turn deadly if someone chooses to drink and drive.

"Drunk driving is a dangerous, deadly and senseless crime that will not be tolerated in Illinois," Illinois Transportation Secretary Ann L. Schneider said. "Today we are giving fair warning to anyone planning to be on the road during St. Patrick's Day that law enforcement officers will be on patrol all over Illinois. Don't risk your life and the lives of others on the road. Be responsible and designate a sober driver before you go out. Then you can truly relax and celebrate."

According to data from IDOT, over the past five years (2009-2013) in Illinois, 10 people lost their lives in motor vehicle crashes on St. Patrick's Day alone. Two of those fatalities resulted from crashes in which a driver had been drinking alcohol. In 2013 on St. Patrick's Day in Illinois, three people died in crashes and one of those fatalities resulted from a crash in which a driver had been drinking alcohol.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) reports that more than 269 people have been senselessly killed nationwide in crashes involving drunk drivers during the St. Patrick's Day holiday from 2007 to 2011. (The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration defines St. Patrick's Day as 6 p.m. March 16 to 5:59 a.m. March 18.)

According to NHTSA in 2011, on average, one person was killed every 53 minutes in a drunk-driving crash in the United States. Most of these crashes involved drunk drivers who had blood alcohol concentrations of .15 or higher, almost twice the legal limit of .08.

Beginning March 13 and continuing through St. Patrick's Day, Sunday, March 17, some \$650,000 in federal highway safety dollars will fund Illinois roadside safety checks, saturation patrols and other impaired driving and seat belt law enforcement efforts. In addition to the Illinois State Police and the Illinois Secretary of State Police, nearly 200 local law enforcement agencies are participating. A combined total of 1,000 or more roadside safety checks, seat belt enforcement zones and other enforcement patrols will occur during the St. Patrick's Day period with most patrols taking place on the weekend and the evening of March 17.

There is no luck involved. Just follow these simple steps so you can enjoy a safe St. Patrick's Day without jeopardizing your life and the lives of others on the road.

If you are hosting a party:

- Remember, you can be held liable and prosecuted if someone you served is involved in an impaired driving crash;
- Make sure all of your guests designate their sober drivers in advance, or help arrange ride-sharing with other sober drivers;
- Serve lots of food and include lots of non-alcoholic beverages at the party;

- Keep the numbers for local cab companies handy, and take the keys away from anyone who is thinking of driving impaired.
- If you are attending a party:
- Designate your sober driver BEFORE the party begins and give that person your car keys;
- If you do not have a designated driver, ask a sober friend for a ride home; call a cab, a sober friend, or a family member to pick you up; use public transportation if available; or just stay where you are and sleep it off until you are sober;
- Never let a friend leave your sight if you think they are about to drive while impaired.
- Always buckle up – it is still your best defense against an impaired driver.