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IDOT, Illinois State Police, Local Law Enforcement: Luck Alone Will Not Get You Home on St. Patrick's Day

Designate a sober driver before the party begins or risk arrest

SPRINGFIELD – Leading up to the St. Patrick's Day holiday, many Illinoisans will don their green, white and orange to celebrate. If your celebration involves alcohol at a local parade, pub or party, no luck of the Irish will protect you from the dangers presented by drunk or impaired drivers.

The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) and the Illinois State Police (ISP) are partnering with nearly 200 local law enforcement agencies throughout the state this weekend and through St. Patrick's Day to encourage everyone celebrating to act responsibly and designate a sober driver. No amount of luck can save you from a drunk-driving crash. Everyone must do their part to help keep roads safe this St. Patrick's Day. The message is simple – *Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over*.

Here are the unlucky statistics:

- In the last ten years (2005-2014), 30 people lost their lives in motor-vehicle crashes on March 17 (12:00 a.m.-11:59 p.m.). Eleven of those deaths involved a driver who had been drinking.
- When celebrations fall on the weekend directly before or after March 17, typically there are more St. Patrick's Day celebrations and potentially more impaired drivers on the roads. Last year in Illinois, March 17 occurred on a Monday, with the majority of St.



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Patrick's Day activities happening between Friday, March 14, and the early-morning hours of Tuesday, March 18. During that timeframe, four people died in motor vehicle crashes, with one of those deaths involving an impaired driver.

“Get ahead of the decision this year. If you know you're going to celebrate St. Patrick's Day with alcohol, then figure out a plan ahead of time for how you'll get home,” said Jeff Heck, Acting Director of IDOT's Division of Transportation Safety. “Choose a taxi, public transportation, or a sober friend you trust, to get you home safely.”

Because St. Patrick's Day falls on a Tuesday this year, the holiday is likely to be celebrated over the next two weekends. Starting today, police will be out all weekend and through March 22. IDOT is working with law enforcement throughout Illinois to help provide roadside safety checks and saturation patrols looking for drunk driving and other traffic violations. In addition, officers will be looking for seat-belt law violators, particularly during the deadly late-night hours.

“St. Patrick's Day can be a great time for family and friends to gather in celebration when safe plans are made before going out,” said ISP Col. Mike Zerbonia. “The Illinois State Police want to remind motorists of the dangers of driving under the influence. It could be your life or the life of another that you save by taking the time to designate a driver.”

If you are hosting a party:

- 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.
- Remember, you can be held liable and prosecuted if someone you served ends up in an impaired driving crash.

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, sober friend, family member to pick you up or 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.

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