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Labor Day Message from IDOT, Police: “Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over”

Roadside safety checks, nighttime driving patrols part of life-saving effort

SPRINGFIELD – The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), Illinois State Police (ISP) and hundreds of local police and sheriff’s departments across Illinois are reminding motorists that they will be out in force this holiday weekend, the culmination of a two-week crackdown on impaired drivers. The message and warning remains very simple: “Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over.”

Last year in Illinois, 16 people were killed in traffic crashes during the Labor Day weekend, the period between 6 p.m. Friday and 11:59 p.m. Labor Day. The purpose of this enforcement campaign is to deter drunk drivers and prevent fatalities by increasing enforcement and maximizing awareness in an effort to save lives.

Illinois roads continue to be much safer than they were a decade ago. Motorists are buckling up at a higher rate than ever before, achieving a record 95.2 percent seat belt usage by front-seat occupants this year. Traffic fatalities remain on a steady decline. Traffic fatalities reached 1,363 in 2005. Last year, 924 people were killed, the sixth consecutive year fatalities failed to reach 1,000.

Despite these improvements, drunk drivers still play a role in more than 300 highway deaths and even more serious injuries each year in Illinois, with recent data causing additional alarm. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates show drunk driving fatalities (motor-vehicle deaths involving at least one driver with a blood alcohol concentration of .08 or higher) reached 322 deaths in both 2012 and 2013, compared to 278 in 2011.

“We are encouraged by the fatality reductions we’ve seen on Illinois roads in recent years, but we cannot be complacent,” said Jared Thornley, IDOT’s Director of Traffic Safety. “The fact is more than 900 people die each year on Illinois roads and, all too often, they die as a result of an impaired driver.”

Throughout the Labor Day weekend, ISP, Illinois Secretary of State Police and more than 250 local police departments and sheriff's offices will conduct roadside safety checks and hundreds of hours of stepped-up impaired driving and seat belt enforcement details.

“For many, Labor Day weekend is the last opportunity for family and friends to spend time together before the start of the school year,” stated ISP Col. Mike Zerbonia. “Alcohol remains a factor in one-third of fatal traffic crashes. Please be responsible this holiday weekend and don't drink and drive, don't drive distracted, watch your speed and buckle up. This weekend doesn't need to be the last time your family and friends see you alive.”

The crackdown, funded by federal traffic safety funds administered by IDOT, is coupled with an online media campaign, “The Driving Dead.” The web-based series features Illinois native and “The Walking Dead” star Michael Rooker living in a zombie-filled, post-apocalyptic world and depicting the dangers of unsafe driving. Fans can view the series at [The Driving Dead](#) and follow on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

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