



State of Illinois
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Illinois Department of Transportation
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IDOT, Law Enforcement Crack Down on Drunk Drivers Labor Day Weekend to Avoid Fatal Crashes

Safety Campaign Targets Impaired Drivers; Innovative New Digital Media Campaign Aims to Keep Illinois Motor Vehicle Injuries and Deaths on Decline

SPRINGFIELD – The Illinois Department of Transportation, the Illinois State Police and hundreds of municipal and county police departments across the state announced today a zero tolerance approach for drunk and drug-impaired driving as part of the Labor Day holiday weekend “Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over” campaign.

On Aug. 15, Illinois law enforcement agencies started the crackdown on impaired drivers in an effort to save lives. The stepped-up Labor Day effort comes as 2014 fatalities remain consistently lower compared to the same point last year. This final summer push, which runs through September 1, seeks to keep motor vehicle fatalities as low as possible through what can be a very dangerous holiday on Illinois roads. As of August 26, Illinois motor vehicle fatalities are at 562, which is 83 lower compared to the same timeframe last year.

“While we are encouraged that seat belt usage is up and motor vehicle fatalities are down so far this year, we can never be complacent about safety,” said Erica Borggren, Acting Illinois Transportation Secretary. “Any death on Illinois roadways is one too many – particularly when using seat belts and driving sober could have prevented it.”

Recent years have seen Illinois motorists buckling up at higher rates than ever. For the first time, over 94 percent of Illinois motorists are buckling up. Based on the annual statewide observational survey conducted in June 2014, the estimated safety belt usage rate for 2014 is 94.1 percent, an increase of .4 percentage points from the 93.7 percent in 2013.

While drunk and drug-impaired motor vehicle fatalities have also declined significantly over the last decade, causing concern are recent National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) estimates showing Illinois drunk driving fatalities increased rather significantly from 2011 to 2012. NHTSA estimates show 2011 Illinois drunk driving fatalities (motor vehicle



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deaths involving at least one driver with a BAC of 0.08 or higher) totaled 278 compared to 321 in 2012, a 15 percent increase. Nationally, drunk driving fatalities increased 4.6 percent with 2011 fatalities totaling 9,865 and 2012 fatalities of 10,322.

The increase in belt use and the reduction in drunk driving has resulted in an encouraging decrease in Illinois motor vehicle fatalities over the last 10 years. Illinois motor vehicle fatalities totaled 1,454 in 2002. Last year, 991 people were killed on Illinois roads, marking the 5th straight year that Illinois motor vehicle fatalities were less than 1,000.

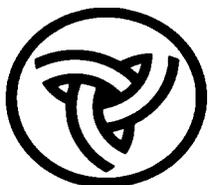
“Among the fatal crashes we see on Illinois roads, one-third involve an impaired driver – and nearly half of those could possibly have been prevented if seat belts were being used,” Borggren continued. “Our increased enforcement efforts over Labor Day weekend aim to take these trends head-on by increasing awareness and compliance with state law.”

In a new effort to bring further attention to dangerous driving behavior and continue the downward trend in motor vehicle fatalities, IDOT has launched a fresh and innovative advertising campaign. The campaign utilizes digital and social media to reach those drivers who are most-often involved in drunk driving crashes, most likely to drink and drive and not buckle up.

A TV commercial airing this week features Michael Rooker, who plays Merle Dixon from the popular series “The Walking Dead,” promoting a website series for a mature audience titled “The Driving Dead.” The series will include short videos, also featuring Rooker, that will be publicized on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Hulu and YouTube, involving a cast of characters living in a Zombie-filled, post-apocalyptic world. The situations the characters find themselves cleverly depicted dealing with the dangers of driving impaired and not buckling up.

Fans can connect with “The Driving Dead” on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) for up-to-date news, behind-the-scenes footage and future episodes of the series and by logging on at www.TheDrivingDeadSeries.com.

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