

MEDIA RELEASE

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AUGUST 2021 PATROLS FOR IMPAIRED DRIVING: PRE-CAMPAIGN NEWS RELEASE

KEEP SUMMERS SAFE AND FUN FROM THE DANGERS OF IMPAIRED DRIVING

Extra Patrols on Owatonna Roads Aug. 20 – Sept. 6

Owatonna, Minn. – The sights, sounds, and smells of summer are more welcome than ever to Minnesotans after the challenges of the pandemic: boats and fishing, burgers and grills, cabins and swimming, drinks with friends and family. What’s not welcome is the increase in driving impaired, and law enforcement statewide is trying to prevent bad choices from taking more lives as summer winds down.

To help keep Minnesotans safe, the Owatonna Police Department will be joining troopers, deputies and officers statewide for the impaired driving campaign that includes extra patrols and education Aug. 20 through Sept. 6. The Minnesota Department of Public Safety Office of Traffic Safety coordinates the campaign and the funding provided by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

It all starts out so innocent enough. A few drinks and never any intention of hurting anyone when you get behind the wheel, but good intentions aren’t going to save anyone if you’re impaired. Planning good choices before getting together is the difference, and as the Labor Day holiday approaches, we need Minnesotans to plan ahead for a sober ride. While we’ll arrest impaired drivers for their own safety and the safety of others, we’d much prefer seeing fewer impaired drivers because people recognize how quickly life can change with one poor decision.

Don't Let Positive Long-Term Change Slip Away

Long-term trends show Minnesotans are increasingly aware that drinking and driving don't mix, but DWIs are increasing this year after pandemic-related shutdowns last year helped curb impaired driving. As of July 26, year-to-date DWIs are 13,643 compared with 12,745 at this time last year.

Over the long term, DWI arrests dropped from 29,479 in 2011 to 22,653 in 2020, a 23 percent decrease, and fewer motorists are losing their lives due to alcohol.

- In 2020, numbers show 131 people died from drunk driving-related crashes compared with 136 people in 2011, a 4 percent decline.
- In the 1960's, more than half of all traffic deaths were related to drinking and driving. In 2020, drunk driving-related deaths were 33 percent of all traffic fatalities in Minnesota.

Improve Summer Fun by Improving Sober Choices

The joys of summer are tragically lessened by the highest number of drunk driving-related deaths compared to the rest of the year (2016-2020):

- June – August: 190
- September – November: 144
- March – May: 164
- December – February: 104

Labor Day has the third highest number of DWI arrests per hour compared with other major holidays (2016– 2020):

- St. Patrick's Day – 4.26
- Fourth of July – 3.54
- Labor Day - 3.46
- Memorial Day – 3.31
- Halloween – 3.2
- Thanksgiving – 2.79
- New Year's Eve – 2.56
- Valentine's Day – 2.48
- Christmas – 2.29

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.

- **Offenders with three or more offenses are required to use interlock for three to six years, or they will never regain driving privileges.**
- **Insurance rates could increase significantly.**

Speak Up and Plan a Sober Ride

- **Plan for a safe ride — No matter where you plan to drink, 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 — wearing a seat belt is the best defense against an impaired driver.**
- **Report drunk driving — call 911 when witnessing impaired driving behavior. Be prepared to provide location, license plate number and observed dangerous behavior.**