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## **Don't Lose Your Independence This July 4<sup>th</sup>** ***You Drink and Drive. You Lose.***

JEFFERSON CITY - Independence Day is fun for everyone to celebrate, but if you take it too far and drive impaired, you'll be risking your own independence, reminds the Missouri Coalition for Roadway Safety. Besides the real possibility of ending up in jail, impaired drivers risk injuring or killing themselves and anyone else on the road.

"The July Fourth holiday is an opportunity to celebrate this country and the freedom we Americans have," said Colonel Ronald K. Replogle, superintendent of the Missouri State Highway Patrol. "But, remember to include safety in your plans. If your celebration includes travel, please be a courteous driver and obey all traffic laws. If your celebration includes alcohol, don't drive."

Last year's traffic-related statistics during the Independence holiday underscore the importance of driving safely. In 2009 in Missouri during the July 4<sup>th</sup> holiday period (6 p.m. July 2nd through Midnight July 5th) there were a total of 11 traffic-related fatalities, 82 seriously injuries and 402 minor injuries. Impaired driving was involved in 3 fatalities, 15 disabling injuries and 36 minor injuries.

"Too many people still fail to understand that alcohol and driving don't mix. Impaired driving is no accident—nor is it a victimless crime," said Leanna Depue, chair of the coalition's executive committee. "It's vitally important that we bring this tragic situation to an end."

Over the 4th of July, Missouri will try to avoid many of these fatalities and injuries with a statewide sobriety checkpoint (July 2-5). And during the rest of the summer, Missouri law enforcement is doing its best to crack down on on repeat alcohol offenders, speeders, texters and those driving without their seat belts during "The HEAT is On" Campaign, which began June 21 and runs through Sept. 21. The campaign includes educational public service announcements, as well as increased highway patrolling from High Enforcement Action Teams.

Much of the tragedy from drunk driving can be prevented with a few simple precautions before going out to celebrate:

- Plan a safe way home before the festivities begin;
- Before drinking, please designate a sober driver and give that person your keys;

- If you're impaired, use a taxi, call a sober friend or family member, or use public transportation so you are sure to get home safely;
- If you happen to see a drunk driver on the road, contact your local law enforcement;
- If you know someone who is about to drive or ride while impaired, take their keys and help them make other arrangements to get to where they are going safely.

“Driving impaired is simply not worth the risk,” Depue says. “The consequences are serious and real. Not only do motorists risk killing themselves or someone else, but the trauma and financial costs of a crash or an arrest for driving while impaired can be significant.”

Violators often face jail time, the loss of their driver's license, higher insurance rates, and dozens of other unanticipated expenses.

“It's obvious to recognize someone who's had way too much to drink to drive safely, but even one drink can make you a threat to yourself and others on the road,” Depue says. “Remember to follow all signs, drive sober and buckle up.”

Don't let this Fourth of July blow up in your face. Remember, *You Drink and Drive. You Lose.* Arrive Alive. For more information, please visit [saveMOLives.com](http://saveMOLives.com).

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