



Increased Patrols Statewide, Designed to Deter Impaired and Dangerous Driving this Holiday Weekend

*By: T. Neil Moore, executive director
Indiana Criminal Justice Institute*

As July 4th approaches and many Hoosiers make plans to celebrate our nation's independence, drivers throughout state are urged to do so responsibly. The complications of tragic outcomes can be easily prevented by following one simple rule: before consuming alcoholic beverages, designate a sober driver or make alternate plans to get to your destination safely.

While it is easy for many people to notice when they've had way too many, we also want them to clearly recognize when they've had one too many. For the past several years, pop culture has dictated that "buzzed" is the drinking-level descriptor of choice among those who have a false sense of being in "control." Yet those who drive motor vehicles or motorcycles in this condition pose a great hazard on the roadways.

The combination of increased traffic and alcohol has made July the nation's deadliest month and the 4th of July one of the most dangerous holidays for motorists. Unfortunately Indiana is no exception – the crash and fatality statistics bear this out.

Of the 1,304 traffic collisions that occurred during the 2008 July 4th holiday period (6:00 p.m. Thursday, July 3 through 5:59 a.m. Monday, July 7), 131 were alcohol-related. Nearly half (41.2%) involved a driver over the legal limit of .08. In total, five people lost their lives on Indiana roadways during this holiday period.

Alcohol also plays a big role in Indiana motorcycle fatalities. Fifty-three motorcyclists were killed in single-vehicle motorcycle collisions in 2008; almost half were alcohol-related. Statewide, alcohol-related motorcycle collisions and fatalities are the highest they have been in the past five years.

Now that teenage traffic fatalities are on the rise, this is also a very appropriate time to focus our attention on preventing untimely teen deaths on our state's roadways. As the primary influencers in their teens' lives, parents are encouraged to model socially responsible behaviors and talk to their teens about the consequences of poor choices and the benefits of smart ones – especially during this high-risk holiday weekend.

As we move towards July 4, motorists throughout the state can expect to see an increased police presence on the roadways. Law enforcement agencies across the state will increase DUI, speeding and seat belt patrols during this time.

Remember, the most important safety feature in your car is you – the sober and attentive driver. In fact, this message has been specifically crafted to convince those who may potentially get behind the wheel after drinking that tragedy “can happen to them.”

Hoosiers can increase their safety this weekend by following a few simple tips:

- Always wear a seatbelt.
- Plan ahead to get a sober, designated driver.
- Take a cab or bus after drinking.
- Spend the night instead of heading home.
- Report drunk drivers by calling 911.
- Make non-alcoholic beverages available at parties and events.
- Drive defensively at all times.

For more information on impaired driving, visit www.in.gov/cji or StopImpairedDriving.org.