

2020 ST. PATRICK'S DAY CAMPAIGN

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Drinking the Green Beer? Call a Designated Driver! Remember: Buzzed Driving Is Drunk Driving Polk County Mo.— Green beer, leprechauns, and elusive pots of gold are all hallmarks of St. Patrick's Day, the long-awaited Irish holiday. Make sure you and your friends stay safe this St. Paddy's Day by remembering one important piece of advice: Buzzed Driving Is Drunk Driving. This means that if you plan to drink any alcoholic beverage, even a watered-down green beer, it's essential that you plan for a designated driver. In 2018 alone, 73 people were killed in drunk-driving crashes over the St. Paddy's Day holiday period (6 p.m. March 16 to 5:59 a.m. March 18). For this reason, Polk County Sheriff Department is teaming up with the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to spread the message about the dangers of drunk driving. Because even one drink can be one too many.

"We want our community to enjoy St. Patrick's Day, and we expect drivers to take responsibility for their actions," said Undersheriff Rod Parks "If you've been drinking, make the right choice to find a sober driver to get you, and your friends, home safely. Before you put your keys in the ignition, remind yourself: Buzzed Driving Is Drunk Driving. If you feel a buzz, you are in no shape to drive."

According to NHTSA's Fatality Analysis Reporting System, 36,560 people were killed in motor vehicle traffic crashes in 2018, and 29% (10,511) of those fatalities occurred in crashes during which a driver had a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) over the legal limit of .08. In 2018 alone, 73 people (39% of all crash fatalities) were killed in drunk-driving crashes over the St. Patrick's Day holiday period. The early hours of March 18, 2018, didn't fare much better. Between midnight and 5:59 a.m. over the St. Patrick's Day holiday period in 2018, more than three out of five (62%) crash fatalities involved a drunk driver. In fact, from 2014 to 2018, 249 lives were lost due in drunk-driving crashes. Drivers should also keep an eye out for pedestrians who have had too much to drink. Walking while intoxicated can also be deadly, as lack of attention to their surroundings could put pedestrians at risk of getting hit by a vehicle.

"Drunk drivers are often a problem on our nation's roads, but we especially hate to see them out on holidays," said Undersheriff Rod Parks. "People need to know that they can go out for a night of fun and return home safely. Don't be the reason someone — including yourself — doesn't get home. Don't let St. Patrick's Day become an anniversary of a tragic night."

Drunk driving isn't the only risk on the road: Drug-impaired driving is also an increasing problem, for men and for women alike. If drivers are impaired by any substance — alcohol or other drugs — they should not get behind the wheel of a vehicle. It is illegal in all states to drive impaired by alcohol or drugs. Remember: Driving while impaired is illegal, period. The bottom line is this: If You Feel Different, You Drive Different. It's that simple.