

Wisconsin Department of Transportation: Those celebrating St. Patrick's Day asked to be safe, responsible

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With St. Patrick's Day falling on a Saturday this year (March 17), it's likely that even more people will be out celebrating the holiday, creating additional concerns about the potential for impaired drivers. Officials with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) are asking all travelers to plan ahead, be responsible and never allow someone to get behind the wheel impaired.

"Whether it's caused by alcohol, prescription medications or any type of drug, impaired drivers are dangerous drivers who jeopardize everyone along our roadways," said David Pabst, Director of WisDOT's Bureau of Transportation Safety. "Law enforcement officers are well trained to spot and arrest impaired drivers. But our goal is to discourage people from making the dangerous and irresponsible decision to get behind the wheel impaired."

Things to keep in mind to ensure a safe and enjoyable St. Patrick's holiday:

- If you plan to celebrate, choose a sober designated driver. Make sure everyone in your vehicle is buckled up - every seat, every trip. Watch your speed, be patient and alert.

- If you're feeling buzzed, you're likely over the 0.08 BAC limit and should not drive. Take public transit, a taxicab or ask a sober friend to drive you home.
- Some taverns and restaurants have programs to provide patrons with a safe ride home. Visit tlw.org and select Safe Ride.
- Download WisDOT's free Drive Sober mobile app at wi.trafficsafety.org that includes a blood alcohol estimator, designated driver selector, and find-a-ride feature that uses a smart phone's GPS to identify transportation alternatives. Since its launch for St. Patrick's Day in 2013, over 73,750 people have accessed the app.
- Report impaired drivers to law enforcement by calling 911. Provide as much detail as possible on the driver, vehicle and location.

"St. Patrick's Day celebrants who get cited for impaired driving risk losing a lot of green," Pabst said. "An OWI conviction can cost around \$10,000 when you include fines, attorney fees, court costs, lost work time, higher insurance rates, car towing and repairs. Worse yet, impaired drivers involved in a crash can lose their life, hurt or kill someone else."