

# Dept. of Transportation: Make a safe ride home part of all celebration plans

Posted on Thursday, Mar 2, 2023

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

Wisconsin State Patrol asks all drivers to prioritize safety behind the wheel when celebrating seasonal traditions this month. With March Madness and St. Patrick's Day approaching, it's a time for festivities for many in Wisconsin, but those who plan to drink must also plan for a safe ride home.

Impaired driving prevention is Wisconsin State Patrol's March Law of the Month.

"St. Patrick's Day and other celebrations have the potential to be the deadliest times on the roads if people aren't making smart decisions," State Patrol Superintendent Tim Carnahan said. "Our officers are always keeping an eye out for impaired drivers, but we need a commitment from the entire community to prevent dangerous drivers from causing crashes or hurting others."

Someone is injured or killed in an impaired driving crash about every two hours in Wisconsin. Preliminary data shows alcohol was involved in more than one-quarter of all traffic fatalities last year. Drugged driving contributed to more than 1,800 crashes in 2022.

## **Enforcement efforts**

[Operating a vehicle while impaired](#) is not only dangerous, it's illegal. There were almost 23,000 OWI convictions in Wisconsin in 2022. One out of three people with OWIs on their driver records are repeat offenders.

Law enforcement agencies across the state work every day to prevent these risks. Officers receive special training, Advanced Roadside Impaired Driving Enforcement

(ARIDE), to help them recognize the signs of impairment in a driver.

Wisconsin also has among the most certified Drug Recognition Experts (DREs) in the nation. Through special training, those 373 officers identify drug-impaired drivers and collect evidence to prove impairment. A DRE can determine if a driver's impairment is caused by alcohol, certain drugs, a combination, or a condition that may require medical attention.

State Patrol works with other agencies in Wisconsin to train new DREs and provide the services of its 15 DREs to communities that need assistance.

"The collaboration between law enforcement agencies is essential to reaching our safety goals. With every traffic stop, our DREs and ARIDE-trained officers are bringing us one step closer to zero deaths on Wisconsin roads," Superintendent Carnahan said.

## **Plan ahead**

St. Patrick's Day is one of the biggest drinking occasions of the year, which can increase the dangers on the roads for drivers and passengers.

If you plan to drink, don't drive, and make a plan to get home safely:

- Identify a sober designated driver; if you're feeling impaired, you likely are over the 0.08 BAC limit and should not drive.
- Rather than risk an arrest, take mass transit, call a taxi, or use a rideshare service.
- Take advantage of the [SafeRide program](#) at local bars and restaurants.
- If a friend attempts to drive drunk, step in and take away the keys.

Drivers should also keep an eye out for pedestrians who have had too much to drink. Lack of attention to surroundings could put pedestrians at risk of being hit by a vehicle.

If you suspect a driver is impaired: safely gather as much info as you can about the vehicle, driver, and location and direction of travel. Then call 911.

For more information on impaired driving safety education visit the [WisDOT website](#).

View the March Law of the Month video and news release online: <https://wisconsindot.gov/Pages/about-wisdot/newsroom/law/lom.aspx>