

Dept. of Transportation: Wisconsin State Patrol leads effort to curb impaired driving

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The Wisconsin State Patrol is urging everyone to plan ahead as the summer travel season wraps up, to avoid the potentially deadly consequences of impaired driving.

There were 7,048 crashes involving alcohol or drug impairment in Wisconsin in 2022. Alcohol was involved in more than one-quarter of all traffic fatalities (155 of 595).

State Patrol troopers and inspectors will join law enforcement officers across the state for special enforcement efforts leading up to Labor Day weekend. The Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over campaign runs from August 18 through September 4, 2023 to remind drivers it's not worth the risk to drive while impaired.

"Every year we commit all available officers to this valuable partnership because it is our duty to keep the communities safe," Superintendent Tim Carnahan said. "Our increased presence helps deter impaired driving and provides an opportunity for officers to talk with the public about the risk of getting behind the wheel after drinking."

Impaired driving is also a challenge nationwide. In 2021, 41% of Labor Day weekend fatalities in 2021 involved drivers who were drunk, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

Drug impaired driving is also an ongoing problem. A person's ability to drive safely is compromised by illegal drugs and sometimes prescription or over-the-counter medications. In 2022, 1,821 crashes in Wisconsin involved drugs, including 64

fatalities.

Statewide collaboration

Law enforcement agencies across Wisconsin work together year-round to stop impaired drivers through special enforcement efforts led by regional OWI task forces.

The State Patrol also provides special training for troopers, inspectors and officers from other agencies. Almost 7,000 Wisconsin officers are trained in Advanced Roadside Impaired Driving Enforcement (ARIDE).

The state has among the most Drug Recognition Experts (DREs) in the nation, with nearly 400 certified DREs. The State Patrol has 23 DREs. They go through special training to identify drug-impaired drivers and help communities across Wisconsin recognize the signs of drug use and prevent tragedies.

Plan ahead to stay safe

Impaired driving has many consequences for a driver besides the potential for a crash. OWI convictions can cost around \$10,000, including fines, court costs, lost time at work, higher insurance rates, and vehicle services. A driver can also lose their license and vehicle because of an OWI conviction.

The State Patrol encourages drivers to plan ahead to ensure a safe end to the summer season:

- Identify a sober designated driver. If you're feeling impaired, you likely are over the 0.08 BAC limit and should not drive.
- Take the bus, call a taxi, or use a rideshare service instead of getting behind the wheel. Use the [Safe Ride](#) program to find a ride home.
- If you have a friend who is about to drink and drive, step in. Take the keys away and help them get home safely.
- If you suspect a driver is impaired, safely gather as much info as you can about the vehicle, driver, and location. Then call 911.