

2019 DRUNK-DRIVING AWARENESS
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CELEBRATE SAFELY THIS FOURTH OF JULY

Think First to Prevent Impaired Driving

Celebrating the 4th of July for many Americans means fireworks, food and fun. Unfortunately, it also is a time when traffic collisions are more likely to occur due to impaired driving.

The most recent national statistics show the real dangers of driving while impaired.

- The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) reports that 601 people died in motor vehicle crashes during the holiday period of 6 p.m. June 30 to 5:59 a.m. July 5 in 2017. Of those, 39% (237 people) were fatalities in alcohol-impaired crashes, which was a 23% increase over 2016 when 192 people were killed during the same holiday period.
- Sixty percent of those who died in alcohol-impaired crashes were in a crash involving at least one driver or motorcyclist with a BAC of .15 or higher.

Many Americans will be taking to the road during this year's holiday period that is slated to extend from Wednesday, July 3 through Sunday, July 7.

The ThinkFirst National Injury Prevention Foundation, a non-profit dedicated to preventing brain, spinal cord and other traumatic injuries through education, research and advocacy, is partnering with NHTSA and the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) to urge Americans not to drive while impaired during the 4th of July holiday period—or anytime.

In Illinois, according to IDOT, during last year's 4th of July holiday (from 6 p.m. July 3rd until 11:59 p.m. July 4th) four people lost their lives in motor vehicle crashes and two of those fatalities involved a driver who tested positive for alcohol. This year law enforcement across the state are taking part in the *Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over* enforcement campaign that encompasses three mid-summer weekends surrounding Independence Day, extending the campaign beyond the 4th. Increased enforcement on the roads began June 17th and will continue through July 8th, with zero tolerance for those driving impaired.

Alcohol is not the only substance causing impairment; prescription and other drugs can also be impairing, affecting even more people. Everyone should realize: if you feel different, you drive different, with altered reaction time and judgement needed for safe driving.

“Remember to think first to avoid impaired driving,” says Susan Crotty, Program Development Manager, Traffic Safety with the ThinkFirst Foundation. “Either choose to stay sober or arrange for a ride through rideshare, cab or sober friend. A safe decision could save your life.”

Other ThinkFirst tips for staying safe on the roads this 4th of July include:

- Leave early or later to avoid heavy traffic
- Make sure everyone in the vehicle is buckled up in a seat belt or child restraint for every ride, no matter how short the distance
- Put the cell phone away
- Practice defensive driving
- Designate a sober driver to keep passengers in your own car and others who share the road safe

ThinkFirst has chapters in hospitals and healthcare settings throughout the U.S. and internationally that provide community education programs on injury prevention. Educational safety programs include safety behind the wheel, sports safety, concussion recognition, bicycle safety, water safety, prevention of falls, violence prevention and infant safety.

ThinkFirst Road Safety initiatives are funded in part by the Illinois Department of Transportation and General Motors. For more information on ThinkFirst and its programs call 630-961-1400 or visit thinkfirst.org.