



# NEWS RELEASE

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **END-OF-SUMMER DWI CRACKDOWN MEANS END OF THE ROAD FOR IMPAIRED DRIVERS**

*Statewide, Nationwide DWI Enforcement Begins Friday; Female DWI Arrests Increasing*

ST. PAUL — Minnesota law enforcement agencies statewide will be cracking down on impaired drivers as part of a nationwide *Drunk Driving — Over the Limit. Under Arrest.* enforcement campaign, August 21–Sept. 7. Around 400 Minnesota agencies will participate in the effort coordinated by the Minnesota Department of Public Safety (DPS), aimed toward taking impaired drivers off the road and encouraging motorists to make safe decisions.

In Minnesota, around 100 people are arrested for DWI daily. In 2008, 35,736 motorists were arrested for DWI. A first-time DWI offense will trigger an automatic driver’s license revocation for a minimum of 90 days. The cost of a DWI can reach \$20,000 when factoring in legal, court and administrative fees.

DPS reports enhanced DWI enforcement campaigns factored in the state tallying a record-low number of alcohol-related deaths (163) in 2008. Despite the drop in deaths, DPS reports alcohol-related crashes still accounted for more than one-third of all deaths — typical for each year. In the last three years, 2006–2008, 519 motorists were killed and another 1,159 motorists were seriously injured in alcohol-related crashes statewide.

The DWI enforcement effort will also focus on motorcyclists — rider deaths continue to surge in 2009, out-pacing last year’s 24-year high in fatalities. DPS cites drinking and riding as a major factor in rider deaths — in 2008, 47 percent of the riders killed in crashes tested positive for alcohol.

“DWI enforcement efforts are crucial to limiting these preventable traffic deaths,” says Cheri Marti, director of the DPS Office of Traffic Safety. “But law enforcement is just one component in the fight against impaired driving — every motorist must do their part to keep Minnesota roads safe by always planning for a sober ride and always wearing their seat belt.”

Minnesota law enforcement agencies will combine the enhanced DWI patrols with seat belt enforcement. Minnesota’s new primary seat belt law requires drivers and passengers in all seating positions — including the back seat — to be buckled up or in the correct child restraint.

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Law enforcement can stop motorists solely for seat belt violations, including unbelted passengers. During 2006–2008, 79 percent of impaired drivers killed were not wearing a seat belt.

While young adult males continue to be the primary DWI violators, DPS says female impaired drivers are an emerging issue. Since 1999, female DWI offenses have increased 6 percent — a significant gain according to DPS — and they now represent one-quarter of all DWI offenses. In 1999, 6,505 females were arrested for DWI, in 2008, 8,444 females were DWI offenders.

Minnesota law states motorists can be arrested for impaired driving even if their alcohol-concentration level is under 0.08 — the state’s legal limit — if they demonstrate impaired driving behavior. The consequences of a DWI can vary depending on many factors including alcohol-concentration, previous offenses and if there was an injury related to a crash.

Lt. Matt Langer of the Minnesota State Patrol encourages all Minnesotans to get in the habit of planning for a safe and sober ride in advance of drinking to avoid a DWI, or something worse.

“If you drive impaired, getting arrested for DWI is probably the best thing that can happen to you,” says Langer. “Spending a night in jail is a far better alternative than killing or injuring yourself or innocent motorists.”

The enforcement and education effort is funded by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and is a component of the state’s *Toward Zero Deaths (TZD)* traffic safety program. *TZD* is an interdisciplinary approach to address traffic issues regionally through enforcement, education, engineering and emergency medical and trauma services.



**Editor’s note:** *For county-by-county alcohol-related stats, contact [Nathan.Bowie@state.mn.us](mailto:Nathan.Bowie@state.mn.us) or [Lisa.Husom@state.mn.us](mailto:Lisa.Husom@state.mn.us).*