

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Natalie Lonjak
Medina County Health Department
Phone: 330-723-9688, Option 2
nlonjak@medinahealth.org

If you drink, plan a sober ride!

Remember: *Buzzed Driving Is Drunk Driving*

March 15, 2022- Medina, Ohio St. Patrick's Day celebrations in America date back to the country's founding. While this year's celebration may continue to look a little different in your hometown, however you celebrate, make sure you and your friends stay safe this St. Paddy's Day by remembering one important piece of advice: *Buzzed Driving Is Drunk Driving*. This means that if you plan to drink, it's essential that you plan ahead for a sober ride home. Remember: A sober driver is one who hasn't had any alcohol. To help keep your community safe, Medina County Safe Communities and local law enforcement are teaming up with the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to spread the message about the dangers of drunk driving. Even one drink can be one too many.

"We understand people are looking for a reason to celebrate, and we want our community members to enjoy St. Patrick's Day, but we also want to impress upon everyone the importance of safe driving," said Jessica Miles, Safe Communities Project Director. "If you've been drinking, make the right choice to find a sober driver to get you and your friends home safely. Before you put your keys in the ignition, remind yourself: *Buzzed Driving Is Drunk Driving*."

According to NHTSA, 10,142 people were killed in drunk-driving crashes in 2019. On average, more than 10,000 people were killed each year from 2015 to 2019 — one person was killed in a drunk-driving crash every 52 minutes in 2019. This is why Medina County Safe Communities is working with NHTSA to remind drivers that drunk driving is not only illegal, it is a matter of life and death. As you head out to the festivities, help us spread the word: *Buzzed Driving Is Drunk Driving*.

During the 2019 St. Patrick's Day period (6 p.m. March 16 to 5:59 a.m. March 18), almost half (46%) of crash fatalities involved a drunk driver. In fact, from 2015 to 2019, a total of 280 lives were lost in drunk-driving crashes during the St. Patrick's Day period. Drivers should also keep an eye out for pedestrians who have had too much to drink. Walking while intoxicated can also be deadly, as lack of attention to their surroundings could put pedestrians at risk of getting hit by a vehicle.

“Drunk drivers are a continuing problem on our nation’s roads, especially around days like St. Patrick’s Day,” said Miles. “People need to know that they can go out for a night of fun and return home safely by ensuring they have a sober driver take them home. Don’t be the reason someone — including yourself — doesn’t get home. Don’t let St. Patrick’s Day become an anniversary of a tragic night.”

If you’re the designated driver, make sure you don’t drink so you can keep that promise of safety to yourself and your passengers. It can be a long night, but people are counting on you, not to mention the other drivers, passengers, and pedestrians on the streets. Take the role of designated driver seriously — people are relying on you.

Plan a Sober Ride

Before ever heading out, it’s vital to plan ahead. Be honest with yourself: You know whether you’ll be drinking or not. Follow these ideas to ensure you and your fellow partygoers live to be Irish another day.

- Remember that it is never okay to drink and drive. Even if you’ve had only one alcoholic beverage, designate a sober driver or plan to use public transportation or a ride service to get home safely.
- If available, use your community’s sober ride program such as Uber or SafeRides.org
- If you see a drunk driver on the road, contact your Local Law Enforcement.
- Do you have a friend who has been drinking and is about to drive? Take the keys away and make arrangements to get your friend home safely.

The Medina County Safe Communities Coalition is a collaboration of law enforcement, healthcare providers, fire departments, school districts, the media, and local businesses. Our mission is to save lives and reduce injuries on Medina County roads and highways. The coalition promotes traffic safety through community events, educational opportunities, and enforcement campaigns. For more information, please call 330-723-9688, option 2.

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