Every day, almost 30 people in the United States die in drunk-driving crashes — that's one person every 50 minutes. These deaths have fallen by a third in the last three decades; however, drunk-driving crashes claim more than 10,000 lives per year. Driving after drinking is deadly. Yet it continues to happen across the United States. If you drive while impaired, you could get arrested, or worse — be involved in a traffic crash that causes serious injury or death.
St. Patrick's Day is on Wednesday, March 17, 2021. While you typically wouldn't expect a Wednesday night to be a dangerous night out on the roads, many people celebrate the St. Patrick's Day holiday by indulging, and often over-indulging in alcoholic beverages. While COVID-19 may be putting a hold on some people's holiday plans, bars are still open. This means that drivers need to remain just as diligent as always. If you suspect that someone is drunk driving, pull over and call 911 if and when it is safe to do so. It is never a good idea to try and follow or chase someone who is suspected of drunk driving; this is a task best left to law enforcement. If you are planning to go out and celebrate St. Patrick's Day, be sure to plan ahead for a sober ride home. Consider having a family member or friend be your designated sober driver, or use a rideshare service such as Uber or Lyft. During the St. Patrick's Day holiday period in 2020, 102 arrests occurred statewide in Delaware. If you drink alcohol you must do your part to make sure that you don't become one of them, or even worse, injure yourself or someone else.

A Breakdown of Impaired Driving

- In 2020 in Delaware, the most common days and times for DUI-related crashes were Saturday from 9:00 pm to Sunday at 2:00 am and Friday from 10:00 p.m. to Saturday at 3:00 a.m.

- The most popular 9-year age range for drivers in DUI-related crashes in 2020 in Delaware was 20-29, encompassing 29% of crashes. The second most popular 9-year age range was 35-44, making up 23% of crashes.

- Males were responsible for 73% of all DUI crashes in Delaware, in 2020.

- During the St. Patrick's Day time period last year, there were 102 arrests (March 13-21). On the 17th there were 10 arrests.
The Delaware Office of Highway Safety discussed the dangers of impaired driving with Sergeant Nick DiSciullo of the Dagsboro Police Department as part of the Ambassadors of Safety video series. Sgt. DiSciullo recalls some of his
experience in working with intoxicated drivers, as well as his own thoughts on how scary it is that people are driving impaired on the same roads as his family and friends.

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**Impaired Driving in the Field**

"My name is John Horsman and I am the Law Enforcement Liaison (LEL) for the Delaware Office of Highway Safety (DOHS). I served 38 years in law enforcement, 23 years with Harrington Police Department, serving 6 as Chief, and 15 years with Delaware Capitol Police, serving 5 years as Chief. Becoming the DOHS LEL was my dream job. I had even joked with the previous LEL that he had to quit when I was ready to retire so I could have the job. All of the pieces fell into place and now here I am.

One of my responsibilities as the LEL is to coordinate DUI mobilizations for all law enforcement agencies in Delaware. Being able to provide funding and guidance to agencies in their efforts to locate DUIs is an important component in the strategy to protect the driving public. These high visibility patrols also act as a deterrent for people who may otherwise choose to drink alcohol and drive, if not for the fear of arrest. This gives me a great deal of satisfaction knowing that in a small way I am still helping to save lives when that officer removes impaired drivers from the road.

My interest in DUI enforcement did not start with this job. In 1974, 1 month after being married, my wife and I were struck broadside by a drunk driver at highway speed. Our car burned and my wife was ejected. She was not wearing a seatbelt and landed on the only grassy area in the median. I was saved by wearing my seatbelt, stayed conscious, and escaped the flames. Fortunately, we got away almost unscathed, with lots of bumps and bruises. Unfortunately, the occupants of the other car did not fare as well. This crash occurred long before seatbelt laws were in effect but from that day forward everyone in my car was belted. This personal event left such a lasting impression on me that it carried into my professional life.

As a young police officer on patrol, I was always on the lookout for the DUI offender. I felt arresting a drunk driver and getting them out from behind the wheel was one of the most important things I could do to save lives. For my efforts, I received the Lifetime Achievement Award from Mothers Against Drunk Drivers (MADD). It all came full circle as I was working a DUI checkpoint on my last day before retirement (first time in 2004). During the final 20 minutes of my last day, I made a DUI arrest. It seemed a fitting end, traveling full circle doing what I loved. Now I continue the mission of keeping drunk drivers off Delaware roadways through my work as the LEL."
Pictured above: John Horsman, Delaware Office of Highway Safety Law Enforcement Liaison and Retired Chief of Capitol Police Department.

Pictured below: photo of the impaired driving wreck John Horsman and his wife, Cindy survived in 1974. Despite their car burning to flames after a drunk driver hit the passenger side of their Pinto, John and his wife sustained only minor injuries and were able to make a full recovery.
The ABC's of BAC (Blood Alcohol Concentration)

A Guide to Understanding Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) and Alcohol Impairment from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). Available for free download and printing from the link provided below.

Read more
www.nhtsa.gov

BAC Explained

Alcohol is a substance that reduces the function of the brain, impairing thinking, reasoning, and muscle coordination. All these abilities are essential to operating a vehicle safely. As alcohol levels rise in a person’s system, the negative effects on the central nervous system increase, too. Alcohol is absorbed directly through the walls of the stomach and small intestine. Then it passes into the bloodstream where it accumulates until it is metabolized by the liver. The alcohol level is measured by the weight of the alcohol in a certain volume of blood. This is called Blood Alcohol Concentration, or BAC. Because of the number of factors that affect BAC, it is very difficult to assess your own BAC or impairment. Even small amounts of alcohol affect one’s brain and the ability to drive.
Julie Willey is the head of the Delaware State Police Forensic Crime Lab. While she is a civilian, her role in assisting law enforcement is huge. Each day, Julie and her team process evidence that helps law enforcement officers determine when impaired crashes take place. Please feel free to view the above video and learn more about how Julie and her team process important evidence and lead the way to keep Delaware roadway's free of those who drive under the influence.

Lastly, I would like to extend my gratitude to John Horsman, LEL at the Delaware Office of Highway Safety, for his contributions to this month's newsletter and his on-going traffic safety initiatives to keep drivers and pedestrians safe on Delaware roads and highways!

The monthly mailing of posters and flyers is currently suspended due to COVID-19. If you or your organization needs to request something specific, please contact our office.

Be on the lookout for upcoming campaigns!
April 2021 – Distracted Driving

For more information and tools, please visit arrivealivede.com or call our office at (302) 744.2740.

Please continue to share our safety messaging on your social media platforms and email Amanda.Horton@Delaware.Gov with any updated information about your organization.