

Hiawatha Police Target Drunk Drivers

*Editor's note: the following was submitted by the Hiawatha Police Department*

**(KNZA)--Be warned that during the period, August 17 through Labor Day, September 4, the Hiawatha Police Department will join 150 other local and state police agencies across the state in a crackdown aimed at removing drunk, drugged, and other dangerous drivers from the roadways. Known as You Drink. You Drive. You Lose., the enforcement campaign is sponsored by the Kansas Department of Transportation.**

**Kansas averages three persons injured every day, and one person killed every three days, in crashes where at least one of the drivers involved is impaired by alcohol and/or another drug. According to KDOT, fully 38% of all crashes with fatalities are those in which one or more of the drivers is impaired. That agency also reports that crashes involving impaired drivers are likely to be more severe than are other crashes. For example, drivers and passengers who are involved in such crashes are more than twice as likely to be non-fatally injured, four times as likely to suffer serious injury, and 8 times more likely to die from their injuries, than if impairment is not involved.**

**According to Chief John DeFore, this campaign is intended to remind drivers of several things:**

- 1. If you're going to drink while away from home, do it responsibly by planning ahead and lining up a designated driver before leaving home. Don't make the mistake of waiting until it's time to go home to start asking around. Chances are, if you do that you will wind up with someone who may be "more sober" than yourself, but not sober enough.**
- 2. Think of a family you know – maybe your own. Now, consider how it would be to wake up every day to the memory of your decision to drive after drinking – a decision which unintentionally brought injury or death to one of them. If you're driving impaired, you are not only more likely to crash, but you are much more likely to cause serious injury or death to yourself and others when you do crash.**
- 3. Even if you appear to be driving well enough to get by, you may still be pulled over for another traffic offence. If this happens and the officer detects alcohol you will be tested. If you fail the testing process you're looking at a fine of \$500-\$2,500; up to one year in jail; the suspension of your driver's license; increased insurance premiums; and the purchase and installation of an ignition interlock device in your car. Imagine not being able to start your**

**car without blowing into the interlock's alcohol sensor several times during an afternoon's errands. How do you explain to your boss why you cannot drive a company car? Add in an attorney's fees and you may tie up \$13,000 or more before all is said and done. Don't take the chance; it's not worth it.**

- 4. We are asking all citizens on the roadways – drivers and passengers – to watch for suspicious driving behaviors. Note the location, a description of the suspect vehicle, along with its direction of travel, and call 911 as soon as it's safe to do so. You may save a life.**
- 5. You can count on this department to vigorously enforce impaired driving and other traffic laws, not just during this campaign, but through the year.**
- 6. Always remember that the best protection against a drunk driver (even when it's yourself) is the use of seat belts and appropriate child restraints – every trip, every time. Restraints save lives and reduce injury severity across the State of Kansas.**