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STATE POLICE

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PennDOT, Pennsylvania State Police, Safety Partners Urge Responsible, Designated Driving Ahead of Labor Day Holiday

Harrisburg, PA – The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT), the Pennsylvania State Police (PSP), and safety partners gathered today to urge motorists to celebrate responsibly ahead of the Labor Day holiday.

“Crashes involving impaired drivers are entirely preventable,” said **PennDOT Executive Deputy Secretary Cheryl Moon-Sirianni**. “If your end-of-summer celebration includes alcohol, plan ahead for a sober driver. Make plans with a friend or use public transportation or a ride-share service, but never drive impaired.”

According to PennDOT data, in 2022 there were 1,214 crashes resulting in 17 fatalities and 817 injuries statewide over the Labor Day holiday weekend (Friday, September 2 through Monday, September 5. Of those, 114 crashes resulting in six fatalities and 90 injuries were alcohol-related and 27 crashes resulting in two fatalities and 20 injuries were drug-related.

Last year, Life Lion responded to more than 2,600 motor vehicle crashes across central Pennsylvania, many of which involved traumatic injuries that resulted in transport to a hospital for further treatment.

“Lives can be changed or gone in an instant because someone used poor judgement and got behind the wheel while impaired,” said **Penn State Health Life Lion Operations Coordinator Joe DePatto**. “These crashes and their results are heartbreaking every time, because they are completely preventable.”

The event featured victim advocate Melissa “Missy” Sweitzer, whose son Zachary was killed by an impaired driver. Missy shared her story of loss saying, “it’s been nearly 15 years since my son was killed and it’s still painful. Your decision to drive impaired can lead to lasting and devastating consequences. No one ever thinks it will happen to them.”

Over this holiday period, PSP and local municipal agencies will conduct impaired driving enforcement details as part of the National Crackdown on Impaired Driving enforcement and education campaign running through September 4. This effort is funded through PennDOT's statewide annual distribution of approximately \$6 million from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) for impaired driving enforcement.

The goal of targeted enforcement is to reduce the number of impaired driving-related crashes, injuries, and deaths on roadways throughout the state.

“DUI enforcement is about saving lives,” said **PSP Commissioner Colonel Christopher Paris**. “We want everyone to enjoy this holiday weekend, so please be safe and responsible.”

During the 2022 Labor Day holiday enforcement period, PSP troopers made 515 DUI arrests and investigated 45 alcohol-related crashes, four of which were fatal.

Impaired driving enforcement goes beyond checking for alcohol impairment. Law enforcement also work to identify motorists impaired by illegal drugs and prescription medication or some combination of these. Pennsylvania has approximately 250 Drug Recognition Experts (DRE) or specially trained officers who look for impaired drivers and assist in DUI investigations when drug-impaired driving is suspected.

The event featured a demonstration of a traffic stop, including the standardized field sobriety test.

The safety partners encourage motorists to ensure their safety and the safety of others on our roadways by designating a sober driver or arranging for alternate transportation this Labor Day weekend, and every time they drink. The public can join the conversation on social media by using the hashtags #BeSafePA and #DriveSober.

To learn more about PennDOT’s efforts to prevent impaired driving or other safety initiatives, visit www.PennDOT.pa.gov/Safety.

For more information on the Pennsylvania State Police, visit psp.pa.gov.

PennDOT’s [media center](#) offers social-media-sized graphics highlighting topics such as seat belts, impaired driving, and distracted driving for organizations, community groups, or others who share safety information with their stakeholders.

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