



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Shapiro Administration Highlights Responsible Celebration Ahead of Independence Day Weekend

Harrisburg, PA – The Pennsylvania Departments of Transportation (PennDOT), Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), Drug and Alcohol Programs (DDAP), and Health (DOH), along with the Pennsylvania State Police (PSP), Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC), and the Office of the State Fire Commissioner gathered today in Codorus State Park to urge safe and responsible celebration ahead of the Fourth of July weekend.

"I'm pleased to join my colleagues to encourage Pennsylvanians to keep safety at the forefront this holiday weekend and all summer long," said **PennDOT Secretary Mike Carroll**. "Whether your plans this summer include hiking, biking, boating, or a backyard barbecue, PennDOT urges motorists to always plan ahead and designate a sober driver or arrange for alternate transportation. Never drive impaired!"

According to PennDOT data, in 2023 there were 38 alcohol-related crashes from July 4 through 6:00 AM July 5, resulting in two fatalities and 23 injuries. During the same time, there were 10 drug-related crashes, resulting in one fatality and eight injuries.

Last summer, from June through August, there were 2,375 crashes involving impaired driving, resulting in 116 fatalities and 1,575 injuries.

DCNR manages 124 state parks and 2.2 million acres of state forest lands that permit recreational activities including boating and ATV riding. Pennsylvania ranks top five in the U.S. for ATV crashes, with many of those incidents involving alcohol.

Possessing, selling or consuming alcoholic beverages [is prohibited on DCNR lands](#) except at specially designated facilities operated or leased by the department. DCNR reminds visitors to

practice safe behavior, follow recreation guidelines, and to comply with all posted safety signage.

“Whether in transit to and from our beautiful parks and forests or using a motorized vehicle to spend time in nature, we encourage all visitors to be responsible as we celebrate our independence,” said **DCNR Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn**. “Safety is extremely important when spending time outdoors and we encourage visitors to always practice safe behavior when taking in nature on public lands.”

Over the holiday period, the Pennsylvania State Police and local law enforcement will conduct checkpoints and roving patrols as part of the Fourth of July Impaired Driving Campaign. This effort is funded through PennDOT's statewide annual distribution of nearly \$6 million from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration for impaired driving enforcement.

“State troopers and municipal law enforcement officers remain vigilant for impaired driving behaviors and take a zero-tolerance approach toward motorists found under the influence of alcohol or controlled substances,” said **PSP Commissioner Colonel Christopher Paris**. “Celebrate the holiday safely by staying sober on the roads.”

Data from the Fish and Boat Commission shows that there were 39 boating-under-the-influence arrests in 2023.

Pennsylvania is a boating destination state, and boaters drive to and from their boating location. When an impaired boat operator gets behind the wheel to drive home, a BUI becomes a DUI.

“Boating while impaired affects judgment and can delay reaction time on the water no differently than if you were driving a car, with the additional risk of drowning,” said **PFBC Director of the Bureau of Law Enforcement Colonel Jeffrey Sabo**. “Boating under the influence puts everyone at risk, including passengers and others enjoying the water.”

Besides the dangers of impaired driving, Pennsylvania residents should keep an eye out for other potential health concerns during Independence Day weekend.

“Many Pennsylvanians spend a lot of time outdoors for Fourth of July celebrations; wearing sunscreen helps protect skin from harmful UV rays, reducing the risk of sunburn and skin cancer,” said **Acting Secretary of Health Dr. Debra Bogen**. “Choose sunscreens that are ‘broad-spectrum’ with UVA and UVB protection and have an SPF of at least 30. Sunscreen should be reapplied every two hours if residents are in direct sunlight.”

Additionally, spending extended periods of time outside when the weather is warmer can lead to heat-related illnesses. Older adults are especially susceptible to the intense heat. For information on preventing heat-related illnesses or identifying heat-related symptoms, visit the [Department of Health's webpage](#).

“Summer is a very active time of year with an increase in social events that present more opportunities for alcohol use, in particular,” said **DDAP Secretary Dr. Latika Davis-Jones**. For individuals struggling with a substance use disorder or those in recovery, remember your support system, and do not hesitate to use them if needed. If you are alone and cannot access your support system, the Shapiro Administration's Get Help Now hotline is also a resource that is always available for help.”

Individuals seeking substance use treatment or recovery resources can be connected to local substance use disorder (SUD) resources by calling the toll-free PA Get Help Now helpline at 1-800-662-HELP (4357) or by using [Treatment Atlas](#), a free, online locator tool to help Pennsylvanians confidentially find SUD treatment that meets their needs.

For Pennsylvanians celebrating at home this weekend, the Office of the State Fire Commissioner has launched a new fireworks safety campaign which can be seen across the state or online at osfc.pa.gov/fireworks. During today's event, the OSFC recommended the following precautions for handling fireworks to ensure a safe and enjoyable experience:

- Never allow children to play with fireworks, even sparklers, which can burn at temperatures of 2,000 degrees, as hot as a blow torch. They are the number two cause of fireworks-related visits to the ER.
- Have a fire extinguisher, bucket of water, or hose handy in case of a fire.
- Never pick up or try to relight fireworks that have not fully ignited.
- Place any spent or "dud" fireworks in a bucket of water for several hours before throwing them away.
- Never use fireworks after consuming alcohol or other medications or substances that can impair judgment or the ability to react quickly to an emergency.
- Wear safety glasses.
- Know where each firework lands and make sure to clean up spent fireworks. Do not assume that a rocket or other airborne firework has landed safely and extinguished itself.

"Fireworks are capable of causing serious injury or death and must be treated with extreme caution," said **Deputy State Fire Commissioner John "J.C." Tedorski**. "In 2022, Fireworks were involved in more than 10,000 visits to the ER. And in 2018 fireworks started 19,500 fires and caused over \$100 million in property damage. A few simple precautions can ensure that you are not contributing to these alarming statistics."

If you have travel plans this holiday weekend, "Know Before You Go" by checking the [Holiday Travel Restrictions](#) at www.511PA.com. While PennDOT will remove lane restrictions and suspend construction projects wherever possible, the Holiday Travel Restrictions shows interstate restrictions that will be in place during the holiday travel period.

Check conditions on more than 40,000 roadway miles in Pennsylvania by visiting www.511PA.com. The service, which is free and available 24 hours a day, provides traffic delay warnings, weather forecasts, traffic speed information, and access to more than 1,000 traffic cameras. Motorists can also see active construction projects at www.511PA.com.

511PA is also available through a smartphone application for iPhone and Android devices, by calling 5-1-1, or by following regional Twitter alerts accessible on the 511PA website.

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

For more information about [state parks](#) and [state forests](#), visit the [DCNR website](#).

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

For more information on the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission, visit www.fishandboat.com.

For more information on the Office of the State Fire Commissioner's Fireworks Safety Campaign, visit osfc.pa.gov/fireworks.

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