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Greene County Public Health

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Press Release

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This St. Paddy's Day, Don't Rely on the Luck o' the Irish: *Buzzed Driving Is Drunk Driving*

XENIA, OH— St. Patrick's Day is one of the most popular holidays in the United States. With a plethora of Irish immigrants—and many, many more St. Paddy's Day well-wishers, the holiday is heavily celebrated by most Americans with friendly pinches, bangers n' mash, and green beer galore. Sadly, all this merry-making can lead to dangerous driving conditions as party-goers head home. In 2016 alone, 60 people were killed in drunk-driving crashes over the St. Paddy's Day holiday period (6 p.m. March 16 to 5:59 a.m. March 18). The selfish act of drinking and driving can rip people from their friends and loved ones forever. For this reason, members of the Greene County Safe Communities Coalition through Greene County Public Health are working to spread the message about the dangers of drunk driving. Even one drink can be one too many. If you're heading out for the Irish festivities, plan ahead and remember: *Buzzed Driving Is Drunk Driving*.

Tragically, March 17 has become a dangerous holiday on our nation's roads. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), during the 2016 St. Patrick's Day holiday period, almost two-thirds (39%) of all motor vehicle crash fatalities involved drunk drivers. The early hours of March 18 didn't fare much better. Between midnight and 5:59 a.m., nearly three-fourths (69%) of all crash fatalities involved drunk drivers. In fact, from 2012 to 2016, almost two-fifths (38%) of the drunk-driving fatalities during this holiday period involved drivers who had blood alcohol concentrations (BACs) well above the .08 limit, with 269 drunk-driving fatalities total. 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.

"We want our community members to plan ahead when they are celebrating this St. Patrick's Day," said Jillian Drew, Safe Communities Coordinator at Greene County Public Health. "Whether you are driving yourself or your friends, make sure you stay sober or plan for a sober ride home. Remember: It's not just about you. There are other people on the roads who want to get where they are going safely. Don't let alcohol cause you to be a risk to yourself and others on the road. Drinking and driving is an act of selfishness. Before you put your keys in the ignition, remind yourself: *Buzzed Driving Is Drunk Driving*. If you feel a buzz, you are in no shape to drive."

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“Please make a plan before you head out for St. Patrick’s Day parties,” Drew continued. “Consider being the sober designated driver for your friends. If you are planning to drink, plan for a safe ride home,” she said. “There are too many safe alternatives to choose otherwise. Think before you act.”

The Greene County Safe Communities Coalition recommends the following safe alternatives to drinking and driving:

- First: Always remember to plan ahead. You know whether you’ll attend a party. If you plan to drink, plan for a sober driver to take you home. Is it your turn to be the designated driver? Take that role seriously—your friends could be relying on you.
- Remember that it is never okay to drink and drive. Even if you’ve only had one alcoholic beverage, designate a sober driver or plan to use public transportation to get home safely.
- Download NHTSA’s SaferRide mobile app available on Google Play for Android devices: (<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.nhtsa.SaferRide&hl=en>), and Apple’s iTunes Store for iOS devices: (<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/saferride/id950774008?mt=8>). SaferRide allows users to call a taxi or a predetermined friend, and identifies the user’s location so he or she can be picked up.
- Call a taxi, an Uber or Lyft, or use another form of public transportation.
- If you see a drunk driver on the road, report it by calling 911.
- Have a friend who is about to drink and drive? Take the keys away and make arrangements to get them home safely.

For more information about the *Buzzed Driving Is Drunk Driving* campaign, visit www.TrafficSafetyMarketing.gov.

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