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This St. Patrick's Day, Plan Before You Party! Remember: Buzzed Driving Is Drunk Driving

(Rock Springs / Green River, Wyo. – March 16, 2017) St. Patrick's Day has become one of the nation's biggest times to celebrate and party. Unfortunately, too many people are taking to the roads after drinking alcohol, making the holiday one of our most dangerous. In fact, 30 people were killed in drunk driving crashes across the nation during St. Patrick's Day holiday period (6 p.m. March 16 to 5:59 a.m. March 18) in 2015 and that was a Tuesday celebration. This year the celebration lands on a Friday.

That's why Sweetwater County Law Enforcement is teaming up with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to reach all drivers with an important life-saving message and warning: Buzzed Driving Is Drunk Driving.

According to NHTSA, 252 people lost their lives in drunk driving-related crashes during the St. Patrick's Day holiday period from 2011-2015. More than a fourth of them were killed in drunk driving crashes that occurred in the early morning, post-party hours (midnight to 5:59 a.m.)

Drunk driving can be deadly. A driver is considered alcohol-impaired with a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of .08 or higher, but even a small amount of alcohol can impair judgment and reaction times enough to make driving unsafe.

According to NHTSA, in 2015 10,265 people—29 percent of all people killed in motor vehicle crashes in the United States that year—were killed in crashes that involved an impaired driver.

Sheriff Mike Lowell, Chief Dwane Pacheco, and Chief Chris Steffen all agree:

Planning a sober ride home before the party begins is the first step in staying safe on St. Patrick's Day. Don't wait until you've already been drink to make your transportation decision. Designate your sober driver in advance, and never get behind the wheel if you've been drinking. Designated sober drivers for the St. Patrick's Day weekend should refrain from drinking alcohol and enjoy the festivities with food and non-alcoholic drinks instead. Remember: Buzzed Driving Is Drunk Driving.

Sweetwater County Law Enforcement recommends these safe alternatives to drinking and driving:

- Plan a safe way home before the fun begins;
- Designate a sober driver or use public transportation to get home safely;
- Download the Drive Sober Wyoming mobile app on your smart phone at http://www.wygcid.org/Smart_Phone_App.html;
- Call a cab or a friend or family member for a ride home;
- If you see a drunk driver on the road, don't hesitate to contact Sweetwater County law enforcement at 352-1575 or 875-1400.
- If you know people who are about to drive or ride after drinking, take their keys and help them make other arrangements to travel to where they are going safely.

Along with the enhanced enforcement effort, the Wyoming Highway Patrol is urging drivers to help keep Wyoming's roadways safe by calling the Report Every Drunk Driver Immediately (REDDI) hotline number at 1-800-442-9090 to report suspected drunk drivers. Callers should be prepared to provide the dispatcher with a description of the vehicle, its location, and direction of travel.

According to the Wyoming Highway Patrol, there have been 14 fatalities on Wyoming roads thus far in 2017, as compared to 10 at this time in 2016.

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