

Troopers tie one on cars to push 'zero tolerance'

Every November, Kansas Highway Patrol troopers tie red ribbons to their patrol cars to show the agency's zero tolerance toward drunk and impaired driving.

The cars will display the ribbons throughout the Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's holidays, memorializing the lives lost due to alcohol-related crashes.

"Crashes involving drug- and alcohol-impaired drivers effect everyone — drivers, passengers, pedestrians, and others traveling on the roadways," said Col. Terry Maple, patrol superintendent "We display red ribbons on our vehicles during the holiday season to heighten awareness of the dangers of impaired driving, and we invite the public to join us in this effort."

According to Mothers Against Drunk Driving, around 20,000 drivers are arrested each year in Kansas for impaired driving. Statistics compiled by the Kansas Department of Transportation show there were 3,366 alcohol-related crashes in 2008, resulting in 131 deaths and 1,999 injuries.

During the 2008 Thanksgiving reporting period (from 6 p.m. the Wednesday prior to Thanksgiving through midnight Sunday), 62 alcohol-related crashes resulted in three deaths and 46 injuries. During

2008 Christmas holiday (from 6 p.m. on Christmas Eve until midnight the Sunday following the holiday), there were 45 alcohol-related crashes, 15 of which resulted in injuries, but no deaths. During the 2007/2008 New Year's reporting period (from 6 p.m. the Friday prior to the holiday until midnight on Tuesday, New Year's Day), there were 47 alcohol-related crashes, with 26 injuries and two deaths.

The patrols reminds motorists not drink and drive, and do not let your friends or family members drive while impaired. If you drink, call a friend, family member or taxi service for a sober ride home, or make plans to have a sober ride going to holiday parties. Motorists concerned that another driver might be impaired can use their cell phone to dial *47 (*HP) on Kansas highways or *582 (*KTA) on the Kansas Turnpike to reach the nearest highway patrol dispatcher.

The patrol encourages everyone to tie a red ribbon to an antenna, side mirror or door handle, pledging to drive safely and not while impaired. Red ribbons are being distributed at patrol troop offices throughout the state. If you are unable to get one from the patrol, any 18-inch strip of red ribbon will show your support.

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