



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **\*Media Release\***

### **BOONE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE**

1905 Indianapolis Ave.

Lebanon, IN 46052

*Sheriff Michael T. Nielsen*



August 22, 2022

## **The Boone County Traffic Safety Partnership is Participating in “Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over” Campaign**

Boone County, Indiana — Drive sober or get pulled over. That’s the warning coming from The Boone County Traffic Safety Partnership (BCTSP) as it gears up to participate in an end-of-summer impaired driving enforcement campaign. Starting now through Labor Day, officers will be increasing patrols designed to target those driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

The extra high-visibility enforcement is funded by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) through grants administered by the Indiana Criminal Justice Institute (ICJI).

“We’re asking everyone to have a plan in place if they know they’ll be drinking,” said Boone County Sheriff, Michael Nielsen. “Our goal isn’t to take people to jail. It’s to make people think about the choices they’re making and the consequences before they get behind the wheel so that we can prevent a needless tragedy.”

Alcohol-impaired traffic fatalities have increased over the past few years, as have other dangerous driving behaviors, fueling a nationwide surge in roadway deaths. It’s an unfortunate trend that doesn’t appear to be slowing.

Newly released [data](#) from NHTSA shows that an estimated 9,560 people died in motor vehicle crashes in the first quarter of 2022. That’s up 7% from the previous year and the highest number of deaths in 20 years for that period.

In Indiana, traffic fatalities increased by more than 20% during that time compared to 2021. If the pace continues, 2022 could be the [third straight year](#) with more fatalities, following 897 in 2020 and 931 in 2021.

“People who drive drunk or high aren’t thinking about the repercussions,” said Devon McDonald, ICJI Executive Director. “It’s not just their life they’re risking, but the life of the person in the car next to them and the pedestrian crossing the street. No one ‘accidentally’ drives impaired. It’s always a choice.”

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Drunk driving continues to be a major factor making up roughly 25% of the state's fatal collisions, but alcohol isn't the only concern.

Research indicates drug prevalence has been on the rise among drivers during the pandemic. Last year, the [number](#) of blood samples submitted to the Indiana Department of Toxicology for drug analysis after a crash increased by 7%.

"Since the start of the pandemic, more drivers are testing positive for THC and poly-drug use, a combination of drugs," said Robert Duckworth, ICJI Traffic Safety Director. "We're working to address that by training more officers in advanced detection techniques and providing new tools to law enforcement, but the best and easiest solution is for people to not drive high in the first place."

Driving under the influence, whether it's drugs or alcohol, is illegal in Indiana. Those who choose to drive impaired are, not only risking their life and the lives of others, but also could face an arrest, jail time, and substantial fines and attorney fees. The average drunk driving arrest costs up to \$10,000.

With officers showing zero tolerance throughout the campaign, the department recommends celebrating the end of summer responsibly by having a safety plan in place. Even if it's only one drink, designate a sober driver or use public transportation or a ride service to get home safely. Never drive impaired or let friends get behind the wheel if they've been drinking.

It's also important to wear a seat belt at all times. It's the best form of protection against drunk drivers. Motorists are encouraged to report suspected impaired drivers by calling 911 or contacting the department.

For more information on impaired driving, click <https://www.nhtsa.gov/risky-driving/drunk-driving> or visit [www.nhtsa.gov](http://www.nhtsa.gov). To learn more about the Boone County Sheriff's Office please visit: <https://www.boonecountyindianasheriff.com/>.

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