

**SUMMER PARTIES PLANNER – DESIGNATED DRIVER
SAMPLE OP-ED
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Plan Before You Party This Summer
Don't Forget to Designate a Sober Driver

The “100 Days of Summer” represent one of the most dangerous and deadliest times of year on the nation’s highways. One big reason is a significant jump in alcohol-related traffic crashes and fatalities.

Increased alcohol use throughout the summer, and particularly around major holiday weekends, beginning with Memorial Day, continuing through the 4th of July and ending with Labor Day, has made the “100 Days of Summer” a very grim season for law enforcement, emergency medical staff, highway safety officials, and the friends and families of impaired-driving victims.

Fortunately, the tragedies from alcohol-related crashes could be prevented if everyone would take a few simple precautions before going out to party this summer. When you plan to consume alcohol, be sure to *Plan Before You Party – and Designate a Sober Driver* in advance. And remember, *Friends Don't Let Friends Drive Drunk*.

Always follow these tips for a safer summer outing:

- Designate your sober driver before going out;
- If drinking alcohol, don’t even think about driving when impaired – and never let your friends drive if you think they are impaired;
- Drink lots of water during your activities to avoid dehydration, and don’t drink alcohol “on an empty stomach”;
- When impaired, ask a sober friend for a ride home, use mass transit, call a cab or your local sober rides program, **(if your community has a local sober rides program, insert the information and phone number here)**;
- Ask a friend or family member to come get you, or just stay where you are and sleep it off until you are sober;
- And, of course, always remember to wear your safety belt. It is still your single best defense against death or injury in a crash.

- more -

Impaired driving is one of America's deadliest problems. Nationally, more than 17,000 people died in alcohol-related highway crashes during 2003, and more than 300,000 were injured. Every 30 minutes, nearly 50 times a day, someone in America dies in an alcohol-related crash. According to NHTSA, about three in every 10 Americans will be involved in an alcohol-related crash at some point in their lives.

Driving impaired or riding with someone who is impaired is simply not worth the risk because the consequences are serious and real. Not only do you risk killing yourself or someone else, but the trauma and financial costs of a crash or an arrest for driving while impaired can be really significant.

Too many people still don't understand that alcohol, drugs and driving don't mix. Impaired driving is no accident - nor is it a victimless crime.

Please remember: *Plan Before You Party This Summer. Don't Forget to Designate Your Sober Driver.*

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