

R. Joseph Ebel, R.S., M.S., M.B.A.  
Health Commissioner



(740)349-6535  
(740)349-6474 WIC  
(740)349-6475 Environmental  
(740)349-6476 Nursing  
(740)349-6510 FAX  
[www.lickingcohealth.org](http://www.lickingcohealth.org)

## Licking County Health Department

675 Price Road

Newark, OH 43055

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Licking County Safe Communities Working to Reduce Traffic Fatalities This July 4<sup>th</sup> Weekend by Reminding Drivers to Plan Ahead

July 1, 2011

CONTACT: Kate White

[kdwhite@lickingcohealth.org](mailto:kdwhite@lickingcohealth.org)

740-349-6535

LICKING COUNTY, OHIO - July 4<sup>th</sup> celebrations often include cook-outs, picnics, boating, time spent with family and friends and, of course, fireworks. But for too many families, this holiday weekend can be filled with tragedy instead of celebration. The Fourth of July is one of the deadliest holidays of the year when it comes to alcohol-impaired-driving crashes on our roadways.

That is why **Licking County Safe Communities Coalition** is reminding everyone that *Buzzed Driving Is Drunk Driving* and to designate a sober driver before the celebrations begin.

Statistics gathered from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration over the past 25 years show that, on average, nearly half of all deadly traffic crashes over each year's July 4<sup>th</sup> holiday involved some level of alcohol.

In fact, 410 people were killed in motor vehicle traffic crashes nationally during the Fourth of July weekend in 2009. Of that number, 40 percent involved drivers with blood alcohol concentrations (BAC) of .08 grams per deciliter (legal limit) or higher.

"The Fourth of July is a time most Americans spend celebrating with family and friends, but in order to keep someone you love from becoming another deadly statistic, each of us can do our part to combat one of America's deadliest crimes—drunk driving," said Licking County Health Commissioner, Joe Ebel. "We hope each individual will be responsible, designate a sober driver before the parties begin and will never get behind the wheel after they've been drinking."

All 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico have made it illegal to drive with a BAC of .08 or higher.

"Alcohol impairs many of the skills that safe driving requires, including judgment, concentration, comprehension, coordination, visual acuity and reaction time," said Ebel. "Even driving 'buzzed' is simply not worth the risk to you or the thousands of innocent victims who are hurt or killed each year by drunk drivers."

Impaired driving is one of America's deadliest problems. In 2009 alone, 10,839 people were killed in alcohol-impaired-driving crashes, accounting for 32 percent of all traffic-related deaths in the United States. That's an average of one impaired-driving fatality every 48 minutes in 2009.

Licking County Safe Communities Coordinator, Kate White, said that impaired drivers not only take the risk of hurting or killing themselves or someone else, the trauma and financial costs of an alcohol-impaired crash or an arrest can be significant. Violators often face jail time, the loss of their driver licenses, higher insurance rates and dozens of other unanticipated expenses.

“We want everyone to enjoy their holiday celebrations, but it’s important when you or a friend are out drinking, to act on that knowledge by putting down your keys or taking a friend’s keys to not let them drink and drive,” said White. “And folks need to be particularly careful at night, because the rate of alcohol impairment among drivers involved in fatal crashes in 2009 was four times higher at night than during the day.”

Licking County Safe Communities encourages a few simple precautions to keep themselves and loved ones safe:

- Plan a safe way home before the festivities begin.
- Before drinking, designate a sober driver.
- If you’re impaired, don’t get behind the wheel. Call a taxi, use public transportation or call a sober friend or family member so you are sure to get home safely.
- If you see a drunk driver on the road, don’t hesitate to contact Local Law Enforcement at 1-800-GRAB-DUI — because you may just save someone’s life.
- Remember, *Friends Don’t Let Friends Drive Drunk*. Take the keys and help them make other arrangements to get where they are going safely.

“Remember, *Buzzed Driving Is Drunk Driving*, so whether you’ve had way too many, or just one too many, it’s not worth the risk to yourself or others to get behind the wheel,” said Ebel. “Please plan ahead and designate a sober driver before the party begins.”

For more information, please visit [www.StopImpairedDriving.org](http://www.StopImpairedDriving.org).

###