

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 1, 2015

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Travel, celebrate Independence Day safely

With a long weekend ahead, many Kansans are planning to hit the road and be out in their communities celebrating the Fourth of July. KDOT and the Kansas Highway Patrol encourage travelers to plan ahead to make their trips and celebrations as safe as possible.

Nationally AAA is projecting that 41.9 million Americans will travel during the long holiday weekend, which will be the most since 2007, and 84.7 percent of them will be driving. Contributing to the anticipated big numbers is the fact that gasoline is about 25 percent lower than last year, said Jim Hanni, of AAA of Kansas.

If you are traveling this weekend it's important to remember not to drink and drive. In the last five reporting years nationally, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (from 2009 to 2013), 750 people lost their lives in crashes involving drivers with a blood alcohol content of .08 or more. Those fatalities account for 39% of all motor vehicle traffic deaths in that time period. In Kansas in 2014 there were 386 crashes over the July 4 reporting period (6 p.m. Thursday July 3, 2014 through 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, July 6, 2014.) Three of those were fatality crashes and 95 were injury crashes. Of the 386 total crashes, 16 were alcohol-related.

Law enforcement agencies from across the state will be actively watching for impaired drivers.

“As travelers take to the highways throughout the holiday weekend there are steps they can take to make it to their destination safely,” Highway Patrol Lt. Adam

Winters said. “Any time you ride in a vehicle, buckle up and make sure children are in the appropriate child safety seats. For those planning to drink over the weekend, designate your sober driver before you celebrate. We want people to enjoy the festivities, but we want them to be safe doing so.”

Before travelers pack their cars they can check their route for delays or construction with the help of KanDrive, www.kandrive.org. KanDrive includes camera images and interactive maps as well as links to rest areas and travel and tourism sites.

If you have a smartphone, you can access the site by going to www.kandrive.org and bookmarking it to your home screen so it’s ready when you need it. If users would prefer to use the text-based mobile website, it can be found at 511mm.ksdot.org.

Much of the same information can be accessed by calling 5-1-1 in Kansas or 1-866-511-KDOT (5368) in the U.S.

Know before you go by using these services from home or in a vehicle that is parked in a safe location. If you are involved in a crash on a Kansas highway call *47 (*HP) from a cell phone for a highway patrol dispatcher or if on the Kansas Turnpike, dial *582 (*KTA) or 911.

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