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HPD Urges Motorists – “Be a Saint. Drive Sober.”

Harrisonburg, Va. —St. Patrick's Day brings to mind shamrocks, leprechauns, pots of gold, and good luck. But no amount of luck can save you from a drunk-driving crash. Unfortunately, March 17 has become a deadly day in the United States, with a dramatic spike in drunk-driving fatalities.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), during the St. Patrick's Day weekend in 2013, 40% of all crash fatalities involved impaired drivers. And we're not just talking about a little bit too much to drink here; from 2009 to 2013, almost three-fourths of the drunk-driving fatalities on St. Patrick's Day involved drivers who were *twice* the legal limit. So whether you're buzzed or drunk on St. Patrick's Day, it doesn't matter. NHTSA wants to remind everyone that *Buzzed Driving Is Drunk Driving*—drive sober.

Locally, the Harrisonburg Police Department is planning extra patrols for the upcoming celebration. “Last year, we had over 250 DUI-related arrests in the city,” says HPD Traffic Officer Wayne Westfall. “Extra manpower on the streets enhances safety for all motorists, and really stacks the odds against impaired drivers not getting detected. If you get stopped driving impaired, there's a good chance your pot of gold will go toward legal fees,” added Westfall.

HPD also offers this advice to partygoers:

- Get ahead of the decision this year. If you know you're going to celebrate St. Patrick's Day with alcohol, then figure out a plan ahead of time for how you'll get home. Don't wait until you're too buzzed to decide.
- If you have anything to drink, count on a sober friend, taxi, or public transportation to drive you home safely.
- Not drinking? Maybe this St. Patrick's Day, you'll be the saint who drives your friends sober.

For more information on St. Patrick's Day campaigns, visit www.trafficsafetymarketing.gov.