



# A GROUP APPROACH TO THE IMPAIRED DRIVING CHALLENGE



Be part of the solution to drunk driving prevention during upcoming holiday seasons

Wisconsin's law enforcement agencies and traffic safety coordinators will again partner this summer and fall with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) for its annual campaign, Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over, an initiative to bring awareness to help address the challenges of impaired driving.

The Drive Sober campaign is gaining momentum. Last year, 244 law enforcement agencies participated in the effort in Wisconsin alone. The campaign will emphasize encouraging drivers to have a plan to get home safely if their plans include alcohol consumption.

NHTSA reports, on average, over a 10-year period from 2006-2016, more than 10,000 people die every year in drunk driving crashes. Specifically, 10,874 people died from drunk driving crashes in 2017, making up 29% of motor vehicle traffic fatalities. In Wisconsin in 2018, preliminary numbers show 159 people died and more than 3,200 were injured in alcohol-related crashes in Wisconsin.

Data shows that if you drive impaired in Wisconsin, you'll be convicted. In 2017, there were more than 24,200 OWI convictions in Wisconsin, and the statewide conviction rate for impaired driving is 94%.

The Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over campaign works in two parts — an awareness campaign to ensure people know the consequences of potentially fatal actions will be followed by an increased enforcement period from Aug. 16 through Sept. 2. This 18-day

span will capture the Labor Day holiday weekend, a particularly dangerous time for drunk-driving incidents. Over the Labor Day weekend in 2017, 376 people were killed in crashes, and 44% involved drivers who had been drinking, according to NHTSA.

NHTSA makes Drive Sober resources available to traffic safety coordinators and law enforcement agencies nationwide. Elements of the awareness campaign include stories of victims and families directly impacted by drunk driving, like Philip Lutzenkirchen, a tight end for Auburn University who died when he was a passenger in an alcohol-related crash in 2014, to bring human emotion and relatability into the campaign.

Lutzenkirchen's family uses Philip's

story to impact others by starting a foundation to speak to people about the perils of drunk driving. Philip's father, Mike, wants kids to "learn from [his] son so that [they're] not in the position that [their] family's in because of poor decisions."

Philip's sister Abby Lutzenkirchen said, "It's hard to have someone you look up to make such a big mistake, and someone that you really care about make that mistake. But I think it just proves that everyone's human, no matter how invincible that you think that they are."

NHTSA's resources include a number of statistics, which aim to shock drivers by illustrating the detrimental social effects of drunk driving. The website also goes through various

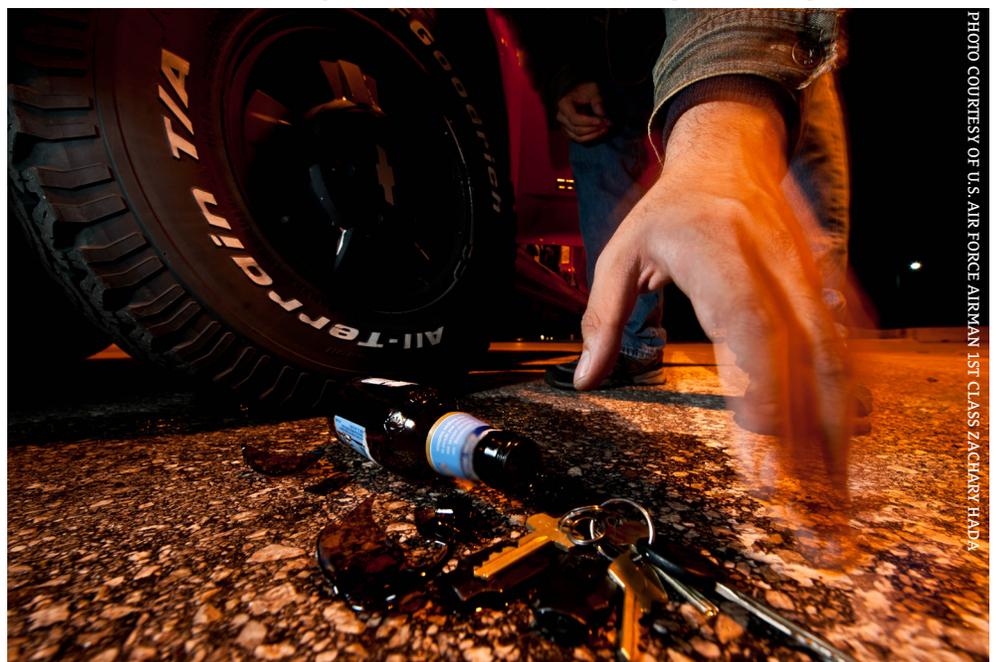


PHOTO COURTESY OF U.S. AIR FORCE AIRMAN 1ST CLASS ZACHARY HADA





PHOTO COURTESY OF WI DOT

Whether it's engineering and building roads and bridges, enforcing laws or interacting with our many stakeholders, virtually everything we do at the Wisconsin Department of Transportation is centered on public safety.

Our many public and private partners, including all of you who receive WisDOT's Traffic Safety Reporter, play a vital role in helping us keep our roadways as safe as possible for all travelers.

Through this quarterly newsletter, we're able to share best practices, cutting-edge technologies and innovative policies that help all of us be more efficient in meeting our many public safety responsibilities.

Thanks to your collective expertise and dedication, we're preventing crashes, saving lives and helping make Wisconsin an even safer place to travel and visit. I hope you will always feel free to stay in touch with staff in WisDOT's Bureau of Transportation Safety to let us know how we can further enhance this newsletter, and be as effective as possible in administering our various programs and services.

Thanks again for all you do and for your valued partnership in helping WisDOT carry out its primary mission to "provide leadership in the development and operation of a safe and efficient transportation system."

**Craig Thompson**  
**Secretary-Designee**  
**Wisconsin Department of Transportation**

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Have an idea for a story? Let us know: Call (608) 266-2405 or email [Robert.Miller@dot.wi.gov](mailto:Robert.Miller@dot.wi.gov)



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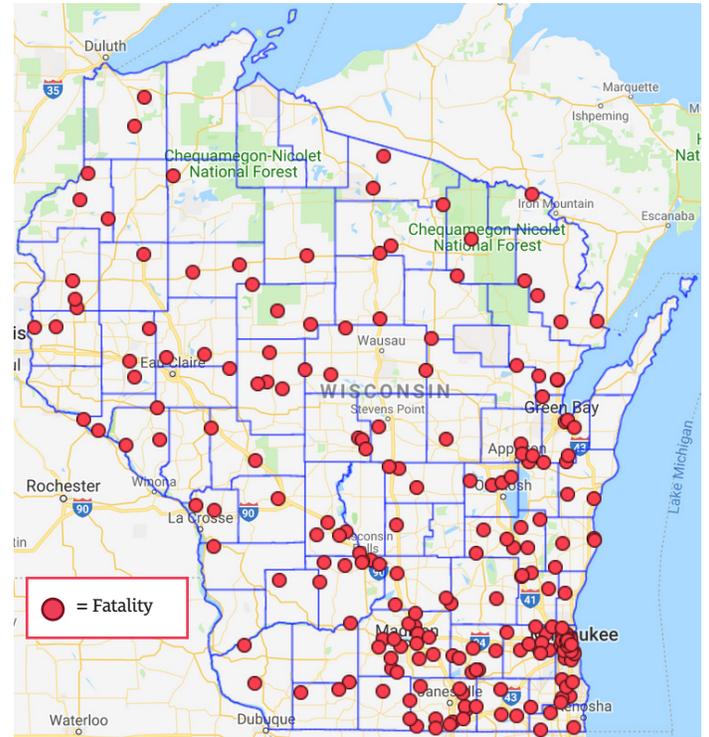
How Wisconsin adds up when it comes to traffic safety



About half the car and light truck occupants killed in Wisconsin traffic crashes are unbuckled.

**PERCENT OF WISCONSIN DRIVERS WHO BUCKLED UP IN 2018:**

**89%**



**1/3**

of all traffic deaths in Wisconsin and the U.S. involve impaired drivers. Preliminary data from 2018 show alcohol-related crashes killed 159 people and injured 3,278.

**\$188**

The cost of a citation for texting while driving — a dangerous and illegal practice. Remember that distracted driving comes in many forms, not just texting. Eating, reading, cell phones and navigation systems are all dangerous because they take your eyes, hands and mind off of the main task: driving.

**41,000**

people injured in traffic-related crashes in Wisconsin in 2018; 576 were killed.

## 2018 SEAT BELT SAFETY AND VEHICLE CRASHES IN WISCONSIN

- In Wisconsin in 2018, 242 fatalities occurred in 212 crashes in which someone was not wearing a seat belt.
- It is important to note that an unbelted person in a vehicle can injure or kill a fellow passenger in a crash.
- The overall number of fatalities from not wearing a seat belt has decreased in Wisconsin since 2015.
- Remember, the best way to protect yourself and others in a car crash is by always wearing your seat belt.

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# WHO WRITES THOSE CREATIVE HIGHWAY MESSAGE SIGNS?

## Traffic Punmasters Are Devoted to Public Safety

How do you promote safe driving effectively but not forcefully?

The answer lies in the delivery.

If you have seen them before, they probably caught your attention, made you chuckle or even had you tweeting about them later. The Wisconsin DOT releases hundreds of public safety messages on dynamic message signs along the highway to encourage safe driving behavior, and quite a few of them take this unique approach of using humor to deliver a serious message.

The driving force behind these creative messages is a team composed of Wisconsin DOT members from a variety of different backgrounds, including law enforcement, traffic engineering, state patrol and public affairs. They come together every two months to plan out the upcoming messages. According to WisDOT's David Hunt, each message ultimately feeds into the overall philosophy about enhancing highway safety.

The team works under tight constraints to effectively convey a message without causing a distraction. With just three lines and 20 characters apiece, the challenge is writing an effective message that won't take much brain power to digest but still be impactful enough





to stick. When addressing public safety, it can be challenging to convey a message without seeming too assertive.

That’s where humor comes into play. It can capture the driver’s attention while also creating a positive environment on the road, Hunt says.

“We try to do it in a way that is crisp and memorable,” Hunt said. “We don’t want anybody to walk

away from it not knowing what it’s about, and having a little bit of a sense of humor helps to break the ice with people.”

Once that connection is established, these messages have the platform to create a conversation around public safety while also being relatable. During the planning stages, the team will often feed off current pop culture, relating messages to upcoming events and holidays. Some of the successful messages appeared right after the Oscars with “No Oscar for Best Leadfoot, Slow Down,” and around Christmas time with “Santa Sees You When You’re Speeding.” These messages are effective when they’re able to catch someone’s attention and have them talking about it later on, Hunt says.

“You put up a message that you

want somebody ideally to remember long enough that it’s integrated into their conversation with family and friends,” Hunt said. “When you have people out there talking about highway safety, that’s a home run for us.”

The use of humor through dynamic message signs has been effective in creating a conversation about safe driving within the public. A study done by the U.S. Department of Transportation’s Federal Highway Administration found that 90% of travelers believe these messages are appropriate, and 71% believe they help raise awareness about public safety.

While these messages are certainly enjoyable for the public, there is also a way for the public to get involved in this creative process. According to Hunt, many people will either tweet out requests at the main DOT Twitter account or send suggestions through the 511 road information website at 511wi.gov.

— Anisha Engineer

**“HAVING A LITTLE BIT OF A SENSE OF HUMOR HELPS TO BREAK THE ICE WITH PEOPLE.”**

# Meet the New STATE PATROL SUPERINTENDENT

In January of this year, Governor Tony Evers named Anthony Burrell the superintendent of Wisconsin State Patrol, making Burrell the first African American to hold the position. Burrell's appointment comes after nearly 30 years serving in law enforcement, beginning as a trooper in St. Croix County in 1990. A native of Mississippi, Burrell moved to Milwaukee as a child in the early 1970s and has remained in Wisconsin ever since. As he settles into his new position, Burrell talked about the goals he wants to accomplish and the legacy he hopes to leave on the State Patrol and the people of Wisconsin.

## ***What initially drew you to law enforcement?***

I've always had an interest growing up as a young person to be in law enforcement. I was actually at a Juneteenth event in the late '80s in Milwaukee, and I went to a booth that the State Patrol had set up. I signed up and attended the open house, and I got a chance to meet with some troopers that were African American, and they introduced me ... to what it would be and what it takes to be a state trooper. I always looked at law enforcement as a noble calling and good profession. You're doing a wonderful thing by serving your community here, locally, and that's what law enforcement's all about — community service.

## ***What is one of your main goals as you begin your role as Superintendent?***

For a long time the State Patrol has been pretty much an unknown commodity when it comes to law enforcement and that's due in part to the fact that, with today's technology and the advances in social media, we really don't have the resources available to us that would help to put the information out there about who we are. I like to think that we are the best little-known secret in law enforcement, and I'd like to enhance that in our recruiting efforts, and to do that we need to market ourselves a little better than what we have. All of those formats [of social media] that are available to us, we need to take advantage of those things and use them.

## ***How is the State Patrol working to reduce impaired driving?***

We understand the challenges that we're faced with in law enforcement when it comes to alcohol-impaired drivers and drug-impaired drivers. It's steady on the alcohol side, but what we're seeing is a greater increase in the illegal and prescription drug operators. We've gotten our officers trained in a program called ARIDE (Advanced Roadside Impaired Driving Enforcement). We basically do a lot of training to give [State Patrol officers] the ability to identify those folks that are operating under the influence of prescription medications and/or illegal drugs. That's one of our goals for the ARIDE program ... is to get 100% of our officers trained on ARIDE and right now we're at about 60% of that.

## ***How is the opioid epidemic affecting traffic safety and the role of the State Patrol?***

I know that a number of our officers have encountered individuals that are operating vehicles that have been under the influence of some of these narcotics, specifically opioids, and we've made some arrests in those areas. Again, it's all about the training. We encounter these things on a day-to-day basis. With the advent of all of this illegal stuff that's out there now, in addition to the opioids, you've got the fentanyl crisis that's out there. We've got all of our officers trained on the use of Narcan, and we've had several deployments that have saved lives.



## ***How can Wisconsin increase its seat belt use rate?***

I think that [seat belt use] is also an effort that law enforcement and the community need to work together at. Education is great, obviously, it helps the public to understand the need for them and the safety impact that comes with wearing those seat belts. But also, there's that enforcement component, when we do come across individuals that are not belted in, it's incumbent upon law enforcement to take the appropriate enforcement action and also educate at that time. I think that's why we've seen an increase in our number of seat belt usage in the state, but certainly, we can do better and that is certainly a goal.

## ***What would you like the public to know about the State Patrol going forward as you begin in this new role?***

Primarily, the goal of the State Patrol and my mission will be that we treat the motoring public in their day-to-day encounters with dignity and respect. That goes a long way to helping and enhancing community service and community policing for us all. It enhances the awareness and relationship between law enforcement and the communities that we serve.

— Emma Leonovicz



# Data Helps Law Enforcement Better Understand Pursuits

For the past year and a half, Wisconsin law enforcement officers have been using a new online form that allows officials to better track trends behind highway pursuits.

By law, Wisconsin statutes require that law enforcement agencies gather pursuit-related data and report back to the Wisconsin Department of Transportation to develop highway safety plans. From assessing the details of each pursuit to understanding trends in the data, the information provided by these agencies is crucial in strengthening pursuit policies, and the more that can be gathered, the better.

Before January 2018, law enforcement agencies were limited in the ways they could record pursuit data. According to David Harvey of the Wisconsin DOT, old pursuit reporting systems were simple and provided minimal amounts of information, typically regarding pursuit speeds, distances and reasons for initiation of each pursuit.

To enhance the current pursuit forms to provide more useful data for agencies while also maintaining a simplistic model, the Wisconsin DOT shifted toward a new form that offered a balance between these two. At the start of 2018, law enforcement agencies began using pursuit forms through an application known as TraCS (Traffic and Criminal Software) which, according to Harvey, provides more information for agencies to better pinpoint trends in the data.

“What the new form does is it captures a lot more granularity about the pursuit, as in where specifically it started and what was not only the top speed but also the average speed of the pursuit, the original reason for the stop, what violations occurred during the pursuit and what violations were discovered after the conclusion of the pursuit,” Harvey said. “Just a host of information that leaves agencies better informed as to what the trends are.”

The new form also provides detailed descriptions, such as the ages of fleeing drivers, to better understand trends of who might be stealing vehicles. According to Harvey, these small details allow agencies to step back and focus on how to target those activities and try to prevent them in the first place.

Along with gathering information, the core of the advancements lies in the unique mechanisms that the form itself offers. The form now provides law enforcement the ability to capture data on some of the tools they use during pursuits, such as “stop sticks” that are used to deflate fleeing vehicle tires, as well as GPS tracking devices used to track fleeing vehicles through a transponder. According to Harvey, these mechanisms allow for a convenient method to record data as opposed to manually entering in information and provide opportunities to visualize data in unique ways, such as generating heat maps to locate concentrated areas and further understand trends.

As law enforcement agencies shift toward using these new forms, the advancements brought forth by TraCS will hopefully allow for increased analysis of pursuit trends in ways that enhance safety for all travelers.

“It was one thing for the statutes to specify that certain information be captured, but now that we have a better tool to effectively capture more information, agencies have a thirst for the additional data,” Harvey said.

— Anisha Engineer

