



DECEMBER DWI MOBILIZATION: PRE-ENFORCEMENT NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**RICE COUNTY SAFE COMMUNITIES COALITION SUPPORTS
SAFE & SOBER: OVER THE LIMIT. UNDER ARREST**
Stepped-Up Impaired Driving Enforcement Runs through December

RICE COUNTY, Minn. — All RICE COUNTY LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES (including the Minnesota State Patrol, Rice County Sheriff’s Department and Dundas, Faribault, Lonsdale, Morristown and Northfield Police Departments) will gift-wrap safe roads to Rice County motorists during a statewide impaired driving enforcement campaign that runs throughout December. The Department of Public Safety (DPS) *Safe & Sober* campaign will include around 400 Minnesota law enforcement agencies. To-date, Minnesota traffic deaths are ahead of last year’s pace, but Rice County’s are on the decline and we want to keep it that way.

In 2006, the state tallied a record-low number of alcohol-related traffic deaths — 166 — yet a record-high 41,832 motorists were arrested for DWI. In Rice County during 2004–2006, there were 8 impaired driving deaths and 1,090 DWIs. The local economic impact of alcohol-related fatalities was \$9,100,000.

“Impaired driving is still public enemy number-one when it comes to traffic safety,” says Northfield Capt. Roger Schroeder. “With traffic deaths on the rise in 2007, it’s the role of our agency to stop impaired driving, and it’s the role of every motorist to make smart decisions before getting behind the wheel.”

On Friday, November 30, 2007, over 20 Rice County Safe Community Coalition members and community leaders will gather with all law enforcement agencies at the Rice County Court House at 11:30 a.m. to support efforts to eliminate drunk driving in Rice County.

In Minnesota, over 500,395 motorists have a DWI on record. A DWI can cost up to \$20,000 when factoring in increased insurance cost rates, legal and other fees. DPS reports that of all alcohol-related drivers killed in 2006, nearly 70 percent were not wearing seat belts.

Young adults continue to be the primary violators of impaired driving. From 2004 to 2006, more than 30% of DWIs (97 under age 20, 240 ages 21-24) in Rice County were committed by motorists in their early 20s and those under the legal drinking age. These groups accounted for nearly one-third of all DWI arrests statewide over the same time period.

RICE COUNTY SAFE COMMUNITIES COALITION in partnership with the MINNESOTA STATE PATROL; RICE COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPT; and the DUNDAS, FARIBAULT, LONSDALE, MORRISTOWN AND NORTHFIELD POLICE DEPARTMENTS remind motorists to have a plan before imbibing: use alternative transportation, designate a sober driver, call for a cab or a friend, take the bus, or stay the night at the location of the celebration.

"Give the gift of a safe lift — be a designated driver this holiday season," says Rice County Sheriff Richard Cook.

Safe & Sober is funded by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. The program is designed to reduce traffic-related fatalities and serious injuries.

Drunk Driving. Over the Limit. Under Arrest.