



News Release

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AAA Finds Alcohol Related Crashes Nearly Double When St. Patrick's Day Falls On Saturday

VIRGINIA BEACH, VA (Thursday, March 15, 2012) – St. Patrick's Day is on the horizon, so Irish blessings come to mind: May the Road Rise Up to Meet You and May the Lilt of Irish Laughter Lighten Every Road. AAA Tidewater Virginia, however, also warns revelers to be especially careful as it's becoming an increasingly dangerous holiday for both motorists and pedestrians. This year, the risk may be even higher since the holiday will be celebrated on a Saturday.

According to AAA, the last time this observance fell on a Saturday was back in 2007. That year, there were 49 alcohol-related crashes in the Commonwealth of Virginia on St. Patrick's Day. This is almost double the average number of alcohol-related crashes which occurred each year over the past three years on the holiday (28 crashes in 2011, 25 crashes in 2010, and 20 crashes in 2009).

"On St. Patrick's Day, everyone seems to be Irish for the day and to offer toasts to their fellow lads and lassies, but it can quickly end in tragedy due to impaired driving," said Georjeane Blumling, Vice President of Public Relations for AAA Tidewater Virginia. "AAA urges everyone to designate a driver to ensure that you will be here to once again celebrate next March 17th and can raise a glass to the memories of fun on St. Patrick's Days past and not to the memories of lost loved ones."

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), on St. Patrick's Day 2011, nationwide 37 percent of traffic fatalities during the holiday involved a drunk driver. According to the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles, in 2011 there were 28 alcohol-related crashes on Virginia roadways during the holiday.

To help avoid the dangers associated with drinking and driving, AAA Tidewater Virginia offers the following tips:

If you're venturing out to an Irish pub or attending a St. Patrick's Day party, plan ahead.

- If you plan to drive, don't drink.
- If you plan to drink, pre-select your designated driver before the party begins and give that person your car keys.
- If you don't have a designated driver, ask a sober friend for a ride home; call a cab, friend or family member to come get you; or stay where you are and sleep it off until you are sober.
- Never let a friend leave your sight if you think they are about to drive while impaired.

If you're hosting the party where alcohol is being served, be a responsible host.

- Have food and non-alcoholic beverages available.
- Remember that it takes 40 minutes or longer for alcohol from a drink to be absorbed.
- Take note of who's coming, who drinks, and who drives.
- Make sure all of your guests designate their sober drivers in advance, or help arrange ride-sharing with other sober drivers.
- Stop serving alcohol at least an hour before your guests start to leave for home
- Keep the numbers for local cab companies handy, and take the keys away from anyone who is thinking of driving while impaired.

As part of North America's largest motoring and leisure travel organization, AAA Tidewater Virginia provides its more than 325,000 members with travel, insurance, financial and automotive-related services. Since its founding AAA Tidewater Virginia has been a leader and advocate for the safety and security of all travelers. For more information, visit AAA.com and follow us on Twitter at [Twitter.com/AAATWnews](https://twitter.com/AAATWnews).

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