**DATE:** May 25, 2021

**Safe Memorial Day.** During the 2019 Memorial Day weekend in Texas, there were a total of 360 DUI-alcohol related traffic crashes, according to the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), killing 16 people and seriously injuring another 34. One hundred percent of these accidents were preventable. Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service is teaming up with TxDOT to spread the message about the dangers of drunk driving. Even one drink can be one too many.

As you head to the lake, beach, or host a BBQ, you may choose to drink alcohol or use impairing drugs. Texas law enforcement officers will be out in force looking for impaired drivers. For people that choose to drink and drive, their chance for being arrested for a DWI immensely increases. After the past year, we are all looking for a reason to celebrate and enjoy the Memorial Day weekend, but it is also crucial to impress upon everyone the importance of safe driving. If you choose to drink, make the right choice to find a sober driver to get you, and your friends, home safely.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) reports 10,142 people were killed in drunk-driving crashes in 2019. On average, more than ten thousand people are killed annually, or roughly one person every 52 minutes is killed in a drunk-driving accident. Texas A&M AgriLife Extension partners with NHTSA to remind drivers that drunk driving is not only illegal, but also a matter of life and death. Help AgriLife Extension and NHTSA spread the word this Memorial Day weekend: Buzzed Driving Is Drunk Driving.

Drunk drivers are a continuing problem on our nation’s roads, especially around Memorial Day weekend. People need to know that they can go out for a night of fun and return home safely by ensuring they have a sober driver to take them home. Do not be the reason someone, including yourself, does not make it home.

If selected as the designated driver, make sure to keep that promise of safety to passengers. It can be a long day and even into the night, but people are counting on the designated driver. Not only does the designated driver help keep you safe, but they also help keep other drivers, passengers, and pedestrians safe too. If you are the designated driver, please take the role seriously, lives depend on it.

Before heading out this Memorial Day weekend, remember to plan ahead. Be honest about the possibility of consuming alcohol and follow these ideas to ensure that all partygoers stay safe.

* Remember: It is never OK to drink and drive. Even if only one alcoholic beverage was consumed, have a designated driver or plan to use public transportation or a ride service.
* Impaired driving IS an emergency. Call 911 to report a suspected impaired driver.
* If you have a friend who has been drinking and is about to drive, take their keys away and make arrangements to get them home safely or allow for them to stay the night.

If you have questions or concerns, please contact me, (903) 473-4580 or email Sarah.Latham@ag.tamu.edu. You may also read more about this and many more topics on my blog, http://agentsarah.blogspot.com/. To view upcoming events or additional information please visit https://rains.agrilife.org/ or follow Rains County AgriLife on Facebook.