

MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

May 2, 2008

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PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICIALS URGE CINCO DE MAYO REVELERS TO BE SAFE

ODPS Also Reminds Establishments Over-serving Is Against the Law

(COLUMBUS) – Cinco de Mayo has grown into a popular celebration for all cultures throughout the United States. As with most celebrations, alcohol often plays a role in the festivities. This weekend many Ohioans will be attending Cinco de Mayo parties at homes or at liquor permit establishments and the Ohio Department of Public Safety (ODPS) wants to remind everyone to be responsible.

During last year's Cinco de Mayo weekend, 339 individuals were arrested by the Ohio State Highway Patrol for operating a vehicle while impaired (OVI). Additionally, the Ohio Investigative Unit made 40 arrests for underage alcohol violations. To keep Ohioans safe, the Highway Patrol will have a presence on the state's highways this weekend and Investigative Unit Agents will be working liquor permit premises enforcing liquor permit laws such as underage consumption and over-serving.

"We want the residents of Ohio to be safe and responsible this weekend," said ODPS Director Henry Guzmán. "The Department of Public Safety works to stop impaired driving, over-serving and underage drinking every day of the year, but it is especially important in cases like this to plan ahead and designate a driver to make sure the celebration does not turn tragic."

The National Highway Transportation Safety Administration reports that from 1999 to 2005, an average of 43 percent of all highway fatalities each year on May 5 and overnight into the early morning of May 6 were alcohol-related.

ODPS is encouraging all Ohioans to follow a few simple precautions this weekend.

- Always have a designated driver if alcoholic beverages are being served.
- Provide nonalcoholic beverage choices if you are hosting a party.
- Take the keys and never let a friend leave your sight if you think they are about to drive impaired.
- Plan in advance and decide on your transportation alternative before going out.

In 2007, there were more than 15,000 alcohol-related crashes on Ohio's roads, resulting in 473 fatalities and almost 9,000 injuries.

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ODPS works to reduce alcohol-related deaths and injuries on Ohio's roads through the enforcement efforts of the Ohio Investigative Unit which enforces liquor, tobacco and food stamp laws in liquor permit premises and the Ohio State Highway Patrol which enforces traffic laws. In addition, the Governor's Highway Safety Office (GHSO) funds the efforts of OVI (operating a vehicle while impaired) Task Forces and other grants for law enforcement to combat impaired and unsafe driving. The GHSO also promotes educational programs, coalition-building efforts and campaigns focused on highway safety. In addition to enforcement efforts, the Ohio Investigative Unit also works to educate bar owners and servers about liquor laws, including over-serving.