

Have fun on long weekend, but remember alcohol and driving don't mix

Annual RoadWatch campaign launches this weekend: anytime, anywhere police will be stopping impaired drivers

Is it really, finally... the May long weekend??? Could it be true???

Oh, you bet it is. If there ever was an official "Summer Launch Date," this is it. We've only waited eight months for it. (OK, maybe a slight exaggeration on my part, but winter sure FELT like it lasted for eight months, didn't it?)

It's no wonder that when Manitobans crawl out into honest to goodness, blazing summer-like sunshine, they want to make the most of the experience. Fun in the sun, be it in the backyard or at the cottage, with family or friends, is number one on the weekend agenda.

And for a lot of people, fun and sun partner beautifully with a tall cold glass of something from the cooler.

Now, I'm the first one to admit that I enjoy an ice-cold beer on a hot day. For many, it's a summer ritual. What I'd like to address, though, isn't that "ritual," per se. It's the other one that, sadly, follows too often on the heels of the first: drinking and driving.



**Road
Wise**

Paul
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"Sober enough" to drive?

Even though Manitoba has some of the toughest anti-drinking and driving legislation in the country, there are still some drivers out there that knowingly drink heavily and drive, not caring about the risk they're running, believing they can "get away with it." Still others—and my personal opinion is that these are the majority—get behind the wheel believing they are "sober enough" to drive safely.

I don't want to ruin anyone's weekend with a "hard hitting message" that no one is in the mood to listen to. It is the long weekend, after all! But, what I'd like to do is mention a couple of little

reminders in the hopes that Tuesday's paper lacks any mention of an accident where "alcohol is considered a factor."

So, here are a few simple factoids to keep in mind while you're enjoying the weekend, if part of that enjoyment includes something from the liquor store.

First, and foremost, please remember that light beer, dark beer, wine, hard liquor, those remarkably awful tasting coolers, you name it—are all alcoholic. Don't think you are any less susceptible to their effects because you're drinking one or the other.

It's the ethanol content of alcohol that causes intoxication, and ethanol levels are the same in 12 ounces of beer, five ounces of wine and 1.5 ounces of hard liquor. Light beer contains slightly less alcohol, and consequently slightly less ethanol, but you most certainly can still become impaired by drinking it.

Think you "know" how much you can drink and still be OK? Don't be fooled.

Alcohol impairment is tricky to judge on your own. You have to take into account how long you've been drinking, what you've been drinking, your weight, your gender, what you've eaten, what drugs you've taken (antihistamines, cold medicines and "recreational" drugs), even your mood. All of these factors contribute to how your body absorbs and reacts to alcohol; so, two drinks can create a different level of impairment in the same person, depending on which factors are in the mix. And frankly, once you've been drinking you're not the best person to analyze these factors. You're certainly not in any position to figure out if you can drive or not.

You know, I've got to be honest. I've pulled a bit of a fast one. I said I wasn't going to play the "heavy" and bombard you with hard-hitting facts and stats.

Police looking for impaired drivers

You see, this time I don't have to play hardball to get my anti-drinking driving message across. The police will be doing

that. This weekend marks the launch of Manitoba's annual *RoadWatch* initiative, sponsored by Manitoba Public Insurance and conducted by police agencies across the province. Starting now and carrying on through the summer months, police will be spending extra time looking for impaired drivers. Expect to see them anytime and anywhere.

If you choose to ignore my "soft sell" approach, and get behind the wheel after you've been drinking, you can look forward to the "hard sell" of enhanced police enforcement specifically targeting drinking drivers. Is this really how you want to start your summer?

That's it for this week. Until next week, be **RoadWise**.

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