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MoDOT Warns of Traffic Trifecta Around Thanksgiving Holiday

NOVEMBER 21ST 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

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As thousands of Missouri drivers travel home to spend Thanksgiving with family and friends this week, the Missouri Department of Transportation is urging them to exercise patience, caution and good judgment behind the wheel. The holiday week brings a trifecta of concerns to the roadway, including impaired driving, distracted driving and heavy interstate congestion.

The night before Thanksgiving, often referred to as "Blackout Wednesday," has become a popular night for get-togethers at bars before the holiday, often resulting in heavy drinking. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, from 2013 to 2017, more than 800 people died in alcohol-impaired-driving crashes during the Thanksgiving holiday period, making it the deadliest holiday on our roadways.

"Driving impaired or allowing someone else to drive impaired is irresponsible and not worth the risk," said Jon Nelson, assistant to the state highway safety and traffic engineer. "Make the right choice this holiday season to drive sober or find another way to reach your destination."

Like Blackout Wednesday, Black Friday brings another hazard to Missouri roadways. On a day notoriously associated with impatient shoppers, MoDOT urges drivers to keep the online shopping out of the driver's seat.

"Everyone wants to hurry and find the best deals on Black Friday. Your best bet for staying safe on the way is to slow down, always buckle up, and put down the phone," said Nelson.

The likelihood of a distracted-driving incident increases during the holidays, as there are more drivers on the road. Rounding out the trifecta of holiday traffic concerns, the Sunday after Thanksgiving is one of the most popular travel days of the year, according to AAA, as most holiday travelers head home after a long weekend.

That means congestion. Missouri interstate routes will be heavily crowded, and MoDOT urges drivers to allow extra time for travel and plan their route according to the Traveler Information Map, which shows real-time road conditions and closures. The map is available at traveler.modot.org for desktop users, and mobile users can download the free mobile app from the iTunes App Store and Google Play.

LAST UPDATED ON NOVEMBER 21ST 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

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