

Bucks rewarded to drivers who buckle up

Thousands of vehicles will travel the Kansas roadways during the Labor Day weekend. Many families will head out for the long weekend as summer ends and the school year begins. Safe Kids Kansas, in partnership with the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE), State Farm Insurance and the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT), want to encourage families to buckle up and drive safely to protect their most important cargo, their families.

This year, Aug. 31 through Sept. 13, a safety belt awareness campaign called “Bucks for Buckles” will be held in 44 cities across Kansas. Local volunteers will distribute dollar

bills to drivers who have all occupants buckled up securely in their vehicles. Those riding unrestrained will receive educational materials about the effectiveness of seat belts and child safety seats when it comes to saving lives and reducing injuries.

“Every trip you take in a vehicle has some risk of being involved in a crash,” Safe Kids Kansas State Director Cherie Sage said. “That’s why it’s so important to be prepared by wearing your seat belt and using appropriate child safety seats and booster seats for every person, on every ride.”

According to the KDOT 2025 Occupant Protection Observation Survey, 84.7% of Kansans were wearing

their seat belts, compared to the national average of 91% in 2024. Kansas saw a 1.5% decrease from 2024 to 2025. Seat belts save more than 15,000 lives yearly and are the best defense against drunk, aggressive and distracted drivers.

“Wearing a seat belt can cut your risk of a serious injury in a vehicle crash by up to 50%,” Sage said. “It takes just a few seconds to buckle up, and that simple step can help save your life. Make it a habit every time you get in the vehicle.”

For more information about safety belts or child safety seat use, call 785-296-1223 or visit SafeKidsKansas.org, SafeKids.org or find us on Facebook and Instagram: [@safekidskansas](https://www.facebook.com/safekidskansas).

Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over campaign

As Labor Day approaches, the Kansas Department of Transportation reminds motorists to celebrate responsibly by driving soberly during the holiday weekend.

To deter impaired driving, motorists will see increased local and state law enforcement presence on Kansas roads from Aug. 19 through Sept. 7 as part of the national Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over enforcement campaign.

Although 2025 data showed a decrease in alcohol-related crashes compared to the previous year, preliminary Kansas data for 2025 indicates that alcohol-impaired driving still had devastating consequences. An estimated 66 people were killed and more than 950 were injured in crashes involving an alcohol-impaired driver.

In addition, drug-related crashes claimed 51 lives and injured 240 people. Every one of these crashes, and the resulting deaths and injuries, was preventable.

“Even a small amount of alcohol can affect a person’s ability to drive,” said KDOT Behavioral Safety Manager Gary Herman. “Impaired driving can have life-changing consequences for the driver, passengers and everyone sharing the road. A single decision to drive after drinking can result in serious consequences, including fines, jail time, injuries or even death.”

KDOT encourages drivers to:

- Designate a sober driver or use a cab or ride-share service if planning to drink or use drugs.
- Never let someone who is impaired by alcohol or

drugs drive. Take the keys and arrange a sober ride.

Make sure all guests at gatherings have a safe way home.

Contact local law enforcement if you see an impaired driver on the road.

Drivers can find more educational resources on impaired driving by visiting the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration’s website at www.nhtsa.gov/risky-driving/drunk-driving and nhtsa.gov/risky-driving/drug-impaired-driving.

For the latest updates on road closures and conditions, visit? KanDrive.gov, call 511 in Kansas or 866-511-5368 outside Kansas. Travelers who need assistance on the highway can dial *47 for the KHP or *582 while on the Kansas Turnpike. If it’s an emergency, call 911.

County

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mulcher to be used on the front of a skid steer. Green said the machine will allow mowing/mulching of small trees to prevent tire issues on mowing tractors and at intersections since the skid steer it is more maneuverable than a mowing tractor. The commission agreed to the \$4,000 purchase from Garrett Equipment. Green also said culvert replacements are going smoothly.

Emergency medical service director John Atkin IV reported on a static problem with the county’s west radio tower. He has done some work but now believes this issue may be on top of the tower and is looking at having that checked out.

He also said that he has scheduled upcoming yearly training for the department along with two EMT’s that will be taking paramedic courses as well.

Noxious weed supervisor Jarred McVey presented his weekly spraying reports. Commissioner Clark then asked what the process was to deal with negligent landowners who have infestations of noxious weeds, particularly Sericea Lespedeza. McVey covered a lengthy process that would eventually lead to outside contractors spraying for the weeds and the bill being applied to landowner taxes. Clark asked McVey to reach out to other counties to see how they deal with the issue. The commission then entered into a 13 minute executive session for confidential data/trade secrets with McVey.

County clerk Amanda DeWitt said she has been

approached about who was responsible for cleaning the restrooms at the fairgrounds near the show arena. The commissioners all agreed that it was not the county’s responsibility to clean the restrooms after non-county use.

DeWitt also presented the commission with new rental agreements for Bressner Hall and the Woodson County 4-H & Community Building. The commission will review those agreements.

She announced that Matt Johnson will be resigning as the Woodson County representative of the Multi County Board of Health. Commissioners will immediately begin the search for a new representative.

In a final note, she said Jacob Green, a lawyer from Fredonia, has requested to be considered as an indigent defense attorney for Woodson County.

County treasurer Michelle Zimmerman presented the commission with two new Neighborhood Revitalization Program requests. Both tax abatement requests were approved.

Zimmerman then stated the county was close to closing out the American Rescue Act Plan monies. Commonly known as Covid money, the “use it or lose it” funds are nearing the lose it stage. Currently a rural water project is finishing up and assured Zimmerman they would meet the deadline in order to be eligible for the money. That leaves \$2,958.79 in the fund. Commissioners agreed to apply the funds to the purchase of the previously

approved mulcher for road and bridge.

The June and July department financial reports were then presented and approved.

Zimmerman then saved the worst for last. She said that some 2025 special assessment taxes were not applied to landowners in 2025 in seven instances. She and clerk DeWitt were both told these assessments were done by a former employee but were, in fact, not done and the error was not caught until recently.

Zimmerman said that by state statutes the taxes must be collected but did note that because the non-payment occurred when individuals did not pay in the first place, the taxes are considered delinquent taxes. They will be assessed to this year’s taxes and warned the commissioners that they would probably hear about it.

There was only one item discussed in old business and it involved a large pile of old tires. Since the county has received a written and formal complaint, the commission has decided to contact Kansas Department of Health and Environment this week and turn the issue over to them.

A five minute executive session then took place before the meeting was adjourned. No vouchers were presented this week.

Next week the commissioners will convene in the Woodson County Ambulance meeting room to have enough space for public comments during the upcoming budget hearing. The meeting will start at 9 a.m. Tuesday, Sept. 1.

Clean hands are key to food safety

By K-State Extension news service

Whether it’s cooking in the home kitchen or in the middle of a parking lot during a fall tailgate party, one tried-and-true food safety step can keep you safe. Wash your hands.

“That is your No. 1 defense against foodborne illness because your hands can hold a lot of germs and dirt, (including) under your fingernails,” said Kansas State University food scientist Karen Blakeslee.

Hands pick up bacteria during daily routines, including gardening, taking out the trash, driving, playing with pets and many other activities.

“When you’re preparing food, wash your hands more than once, such as after you’ve handled raw eggs or meat or anything like that because that will help to prevent cross-con-

tamination of food products,” Blakeslee said.

“So never forget to wash your hands. It only takes 20 seconds with soap and warm water,” or about the time it takes to sing the alphabet. “Be sure to scrub your hands...because the bubbles really do pick up the dirt and take it away. It’s a very important step to take.”

At a tailgate party or anywhere a sink and warm water is not available, Blakeslee suggests including a separate jug of warm water and soap in your cooking supplies.

“If you have a squirt bottle of soap that is half empty, add water to it and you’ve got a soap-and-water mixture readily available. Or, if you are using a jug with warm water, put soap in it (ahead of time) and that’s your designated hand washing station.”

Another option, Blakeslee said, is bringing along wet wash cloths in baggies, or using wet wipes. Hand sanitizers alone, she adds, is not a reliable option.

“Hand sanitizers don’t work very well unless your hands are clean to start with,” Blakeslee said. “They can be used in a pinch, but it’s best to wash your hands first and then use a hand sanitizer.”

Blakeslee, who also is coordinator of K-State’s Rapid Response Center for Food Science, said September is Food Safety Education Month, a time when food scientists share

important reminders about safety at the dinner table.

Some additional tips:

- Keep raw meat separated from everything else, particularly when taking it outside to picnics or tailgate parties. Put meat in separate bags during transportation, as well as at home. Use a separate plate to serve cooked meats.
- Use separate utensils for various foods you are cooking. “If you don’t have a separate set of tongs, then wash the one’s you have between uses,” Blakeslee said.
- Keep hot foods hot, and cold foods cold. The temperature danger zone for foods is between 40 and 140 degrees Fahrenheit. Cold foods should be stored in an environment colder than 40 F, and hot foods should be held at 140 F or higher. For outdoor parties, this means bringing lots of ice, and perhaps multiple coolers.

“We are still in summer, and it’s going to get hot,” Blakeslee said. “Hot temperatures will heat up food quickly. So if you’re outside having a picnic or tailgate party when the weather is above 90 degrees, you want to get the leftovers chilled within an hour of cooking the food.”

More food safety tips are available online from the Rapid Response Center for Food Science. Blakeslee also publishes a monthly newsletter, called You Asked It!, with timely tips for safe food in and out of the home.

It’s time to plant salad in the fall garden

By K-State Extension news service

Got Salad?

Kansas State University horticulture expert Matt McKernan says Kansas gardeners can maximize the growing season in Kansas by taking advantage of the fall growing season for many vegetable crops.

“Radishes, spinach, turnips, mustard, lettuce and other leafy greens can be planted from mid-August to early September, extending the harvest into fall,” McKernan said. “If you plan to plant seeds into the ground, plant them slightly deeper than recommended for spring. This will give seeds access to slightly cooler soil that retains more moisture.”

Growing a salad garden means providing regular water until the seeds germinate, according to McKernan. “Sprinkle a light layer of compost over the top of the seeds to prevent the soil from forming a crust,” he said.

An alternative way to grow crops suitable for a salad is to use a bag of potting media. McKernan outlined steps to grow leafy greens in this manner:

- Place the unopened bag of potting soil on a pallet,

- cart, or similar support. This will allow you to move the planting, as needed. If not placed on a support, the bag should not be moved after planting to avoid displacing seeds.
- Lay the bag flat and cut open the top-facing, long side of the bag to expose the potting media.
- Puncture several small holes or slits in the bottom side of the bag to allow excess water to drain. This helps prevent plant roots from drowning or rotting, while also preventing excess fertilizer salts from building up in the bag.
- Mix fertilizer into the potting media according to the product instructions, if it is not already included as part of the potting media.
- Plant the seeds as recommended on the packet. Shallow-rooted salad greens are best suited for this growing method, including lettuce, kale, mustard greens, spinach, or Swiss chard.
- “One benefit of growing fall greens in a potting media bag is the temperature of the media can be regulated by relocating the bag,” McKernan said. “This is particularly helpful during August and September when the heat can hinder germination and negatively
- affect flavor of certain leafy greens and cole crops.”
- McKernan added that due to the limited amount of growing space in a potting media bag, it is important to monitor moisture closely while the crop is growing.
- McKernan and his colleagues in K-State’s Department of Horticulture and Natural Resources produce a weekly Horticulture Newsletter with tips for maintaining home landscapes and gardens. The newsletter is available to view online or can be delivered by email each week.

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