

## Governor’s Highway Safety Program Stresses Summer Driving, Heat Safety

As North Carolina enters the heart of the summer vacation period, the Governor’s Highway Safety Program is partnering with the N.C. Department of Insurance to underscore critical safety measures focusing on holiday travel safety and the dangers of vehicular heatstroke.

GHSP Director Mark Ezzell joined N.C. Commissioner of Insurance Mike Causey and Johnston County Sheriff Steve Bizzell at a press conference today at the eastbound Interstate 40 Rest Area in Benson, emphasizing the shared responsibility of all North Carolinians to ensure a safe summer for everyone on and off the roads.

“The summer months between Memorial Day weekend and Labor Day weekend are a popular time for folks to enjoy our beautiful state, but it is also a time of increased travel, hot weather and a change in routine,” Ezzell said. “We all must commit to making smart choices behind the wheel and never leaving children or pets unattended in vehicles, even for a moment.”

Commissioner Causey and Sheriff Bizzell reinforced this safety message by highlighting the often-fatal consequences of vehicular heatstroke. It is vital for all state residents and visitors to:

- Never leave a child, vulnerable adult or pet unattended in a hot vehicle.
- Always check the back seat before leaving your vehicle.
- Plan travel routes in advance and allow extra time for potential delays.
- Designate a sober driver or plan for a safe ride home if you plan to consume alcohol or other impairing substances.
- Buckle up in every seat, every time.
- Avoid distracted driving by utilizing hands-free technology or putting away cell phones and other devices.

Be aware of increased pedestrian and cyclist activity during summer months. Through this and other similar public awareness campaigns, North Carolina leaders are determined to make our roads safer for everyone during the summer and throughout the rest of the year.

## Commissioner Causey Calls for Safe Practices During Fourth of July Celebrations

North Carolina Insurance Commissioner Mike Causey encourages the public to put safety first around fireworks and the grill during Fourth of July celebrations.

“A few minor precautions can mean the difference between life and death,” said Commissioner Causey. “By planning ahead and staying alert, we can prevent tragedies and ensure everyone has a safe and enjoyable time.”

Commissioner Causey shared essential safety tips in a newly released video, offering guidance on how to stay safe during the holiday.

According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), fireworks misuse and malfunction caused a total of 9,700 injuries in 2023. Younger age groups were the most affected, with teenagers between the ages of 15 to 19 experiencing the highest number of injuries, followed closely by children aged five to nine.

“Sadly, many people are injured or killed around Independence Day every year because of misusing fireworks or practicing unsafe grilling techniques,” said Commissioner Causey. “Many of these incidents could have been avoided with careful handling and adherence to safety guidelines.”

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) reports that grill fires on residential properties result in an average of 10 deaths, 100 injuries and \$37 million in property loss each year. Over half of these fires occur between the months of May and August. By taking the proper precautions, we can make the most of the summer while also minimizing the risk of accidents.

**Commissioner Causey recommends the following tips this Fourth of July**

- While using fireworks:**
- Do not let children ignite fireworks or sparklers
  - Make sure fireworks are legal in your area before attempting to use
  - Always keep a bucket of water or garden hose nearby
  - Light fireworks one at a time, moving back quickly
  - Do not attempt to pick up or re-light fireworks that have not ignited fully
  - Never attempt to use fireworks while under the influence of alcohol or drugs

- While grilling:**
- Only use your grill outside, keeping it at least three feet away from any siding or rails
  - Open your gas grill before lighting
  - Never walk away from your grill when lit
  - Clean your grill after every use
  - Once completely cooled, place the coals from your grill in a metal container with a lid
- More information on Fourth of July safety can be found on the NCDOT website, [ncdot.gov](https://www.ncdot.gov).

## Winston-Salem man “tickled to death” with 10 Million Dollar Top Prize Win

Christopher Sink of Winston-Salem felt an urge to buy a \$50 scratch-off on Thursday, and his instinct paid off with a \$10 million win. “Sometimes you have a gut feeling,” he said. “It just happened to be my lucky day.”

Sink, an owner of a construction business, bought his lucky \$10 Million Spectacular ticket from KP Food Mart on Old Thomasville Road in Winston-Salem. “I was really nervous at first,” he said. “It was kind of a crazy feeling.”

After staring at his ticket for a long time, Sink said he started to worry he might lose it. “I didn’t want the wind to blow it away,” he laughed.

Sink’s big win marks only the second \$10 million win in North Carolina so far this year. This win was not his first stroke of good luck though. “I actually won \$10,000 last week on a different ticket,” he said. “It’s kind of hard to fathom.”

When Sink arrived Thursday to collect his winnings, he had a decision to make. He could choose to receive his prize as an annuity of \$500,000 a year over 20 years or a lump sum of \$6 million. He chose the lump sum of \$6 million and, after required state and federal tax withholdings, took home \$4,305,014.

“I’m tickled to death about this,” he said. Sink plans to use his winnings to pay bills, invest, and buy equipment to help his construction business.

The \$10 Million Spectacular game debuted in December 2023 with five top prizes of \$10 million, 20 prizes of \$1 million and 20 prizes of \$100,000. One \$10 million prize, two \$1 million prizes and four \$100,000 prizes remain to be claimed.

For details on how money raised by the lottery made a difference for education programs in Anson County last year, visit [www.nclottery.com](https://www.nclottery.com) and click on the “Impact” section.

## Statewide ‘Operation Firecracker Booze It & Lose It’ Campaign in Effect Through July 6

Every year, the Fourth of July holiday ranks as one of the deadliest periods on the nation’s roads. The N.C. Governor’s Highway Safety Program launched its “Operation Firecracker Booze It & Lose It” campaign today to promote safe driving around the state. The annual campaign uses public outreach and law enforcement to discourage impaired driving by performing more checkpoints and patrols on the days leading up to and following the holiday.

“We want everyone to enjoy the holiday and celebrate but getting behind the wheel after drinking is never worth the risk,” said GHSP Director Mark Ezzell. “Last year, 11,782 crashes were reported statewide involving drivers who were under the influence of alcohol. This is unacceptable. Law enforcement officers from every county in the state will be working this campaign to catch impaired drivers.”

A total of 176 alcohol-related crashes and five fatalities occurred on North Carolina roads during the Fourth of July weekend in 2024, according to crash data from the N.C. Department of Transportation. The “Booze It & Lose It” campaign serves as a reminder that there are severe consequences for reckless behavior.

“Celebrating the Fourth of July responsibly could not be simpler,” said Michael Panzarella, the chief of police for Emerald Isle, which helped kick off this year’s campaign. “What’s not simple are the impacts of someone choosing to drink and then drive. Decide in advance how to get home safely. Too often we see impaired drivers injure themselves and others when they make the choice to drive under the influence.”

There are plenty of ways to arrive safely to a destination, including designating a sober driver or calling a taxi or rideshare service. It is always good to plan ahead and work toward making a safer environment and a more enjoyable holiday for everyone.

Please visit NCDOT’s website to learn more about the campaign and consequences of impaired driving. [ncdot.gov](https://www.ncdot.gov)

## New ID Card for People Aged 60+ Provides Free or Reduced Admission to High School Sporting Events

The Senior Tar Heel Athletic Card is a FREE discount card meant for individuals aged 60 years and older to gain reduced admission or free admission to many regular-season high school sporting events. The Senior Tar Heel Athletic Cards are now available at Grace Senior Center. Come and get yours today!

Grace Senior Center is located at 199 Highway 742 South in Wadesboro, on the left just past IGA. For information call 704-694-6616. The hours are Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.



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