June 2006

Dear Traffic Safety Partners:

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation, Bureau of Transportation Safety is pleased to provide you with a copy of the 2003 Wisconsin Alcohol Traffic Facts book. Please note that the title of this book reflects the year for which the most recent data was compiled, not the year of publication.

This book provides statewide traffic-related alcohol information. The emphasis on traffic crashes, arrests, convictions and driver safety plan data presents a variety of alcohol-related data that will serve as a resource for safety, health and social service professionals.

We want to thank the Wisconsin Departments of Health and Family Services, Public Instruction, Natural Resources, Revenue, the Office of Justice Assistance, the University of Wisconsin Law School Resource Center on Impaired Driving, and the WisDOT Division of Motor Vehicles for their contributions to the content of this book.

This document can be viewed online at www.dot.wisconsin.gov. To obtain additional copies of this book or for more information, please contact us.

Sincerely,

Major Daniel W. Lonsdorf  
Director, Bureau of Transportation Safety  
DT1454
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2003 WISCONSIN ALCOHOL TRAFFIC FACTS
• In 2003, 348 people were killed and 6,445 people were injured in 9,007 alcohol-related motor vehicle crashes in Wisconsin. Alcohol-related crashes accounted for 7% of all crashes in the state, 11% of all injury crashes, and 44% of all fatal crashes. Since 1993, alcohol-related deaths have risen 17% (from 297), alcohol-related injuries have declined 20% (from 8,686), and alcohol-related crashes have declined 18% (from 11,516).

• On average, one person was killed or injured in an alcohol-related crash in Wisconsin every 77 minutes during 2003. In 1993, on average, one person was killed or injured in an alcohol-related crash in Wisconsin every 63 minutes.

• During 2003, 39,037 people were arrested for Operating While Intoxicated (OWI) in Wisconsin, including 656 persons who were under 18. This compares to 35,468 OWI arrests in 1993.

• Of the 9,002 drinking drivers involved in crashes in 2003, 1,323 (15%) were under age 21 and 7,664 were age 21 or older. In 1983, when the minimum drinking age was 18, 28% of the drinking drivers in crashes were under 21. By 1993, the minimum drinking age has risen to 21 and the portion of drinking drivers in crashes who were age 20 and younger had fallen to 10%.

• In 2003, 195 drivers killed in crashes had an alcohol concentration (AC) of 0.10% or higher; 15 were under age 21 and 180 were age 21 or older. These 180 drivers represent 38% of all drivers that were killed and tested for alcohol concentration. The 15 drivers under age 21 represent 24% of all drivers under age 21 that were killed and tested for alcohol concentration. In 1993, 42% of all drivers killed and tested for alcohol concentration had an AC of 0.10% or higher.

• The median alcohol concentration (AC) test result for the 2003 OWI-related offenses was 0.17%.

• In 2001, 5% of the Behavioral Risk Factor Survey respondents (age 18 and older) reported that they drove after drinking too much during the past month. In the 2003 Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 9% of 10th graders and 24% of 12th graders responded that they drove after drinking in the past 30 days.

• A “typical” OWI offender is a male in his late thirties.

• Drivers who have previously been convicted of one or more OWI offenses do not comprise the bulk of drivers in fatal and non-fatal serious injury crashes involving drinking and driving. A decade-long review of drivers who had been drinking and were involved in crashes resulting in one or more deaths or incapacitating injuries revealed that three out of four of the drivers had no prior convictions for OWI or related traffic offenses on their Wisconsin driver records.

• Crash rates for drinking drivers in Wisconsin have measurably declined in response to legislative action and have been largely constant for the last decade.