

Files taken from Office of Traffic Safety – Communication Toolkit 2011

August - Impaired Driving

I. Key Messages

The following key messages can be used to support the Impaired Driving Communication Campaign:

- Impaired driving is a crime and it will be treated as such. Alberta is getting tough on impaired drivers. You will be caught!
- Driving while impaired by drugs and refusing to comply with a demand for physical sobriety tests or to provide bodily fluid samples is a criminal offense.
- You do not have to be legally drunk to be charged with impaired driving.
- Drivers who choose to drive impaired face not only the possibility of killing themselves, their friends or someone else, but also very serious legal, financial, social and other consequences.
- Make the right choice for everyone – don't drive if you have been drinking or using drugs.
- Plan ahead for safe transportation. There are alternatives to impaired driving.
- If you encounter a suspected impaired driver, record the vehicle license plate number and dial 911 anywhere in the province.
- You have a lot to lose: your freedom, job, dignity, even your life.

II. Fact Sheet

Impaired driving whether by alcohol or drugs imposes enormous costs on our society. Families, the health care system, the legal system, insurance companies and the general public all pay the price for impaired drivers.

If you drive impaired, your luck will run out – you will get caught. Even worse, you may be involved in a severe collision that harms someone you love.

Facts to Know

- Choosing to drive while impaired can get you a criminal record and will cost you: your freedom, your dignity; your job; your chance of future employment and even your life.
- If the police determine your ability to operate a vehicle has been impaired by alcohol or drugs, even if your Blood Alcohol Concentration is below 80 mg, you can be charged with impaired driving.
- Police may disqualify you from driving for 24 hours if they believe your ability to drive is impaired.

- If you are **charged** with an impaired driving offense, you will lose your licence automatically for at least three months. You will receive a six-month suspension if your alcohol related offense involves injury or death. Both drug-impaired and alcohol-impaired drivers will be treated equally, with equal severity.
- For more information on Alberta's Administrative Licence Suspension see <http://www.atsb.alberta.ca/503.htm>.
- If you are **convicted**, Alberta driver licence suspension periods are as follows:
 - First time offenders automatically receive a one-year driver licence suspension.
 - Second time offenders receive a three-year driver licence suspension.
 - Third time offenders receive a five-year driver licence suspension.
 - Drivers convicted of impaired driving causing injury or death, receive a mandatory five year licence suspension.
- Designated drivers should not consume **any** alcohol or use any drugs.
- On average over the past five years, approximately 8,100 people are convicted of impaired driving in Alberta each year.
- On average over the past five years, approximately 8,600 24-hour driving disqualifications are issued each year under section 89(1) of the *Traffic Safety Act* when police suspect a driver's physical or mental ability had been affected by alcohol, drugs or other substances.
- According to statistics, males between 18 and 24 years of age are most likely to have been drinking before the crash. Also, male drivers are much more likely to have consumed alcohol prior to a collision compared to female drivers.
- On average in Alberta, one in five drivers involved in fatal collisions have been drinking prior to the collision. This compares to an average of about one in 20 drivers involved in injury collisions. As the severity of the collision increases, so does the likelihood that the collision will involve a drinking driver.
- Warmer weather months (May to September) experience the highest number of casualty collisions involving alcohol.
- The most casualty collisions involving alcohol occur on the weekends. The most likely time period for these collisions, on any day of the week, is between 11 p.m. and 3 a.m.
- Drinking and driving collisions are often associated with long weekends.

III. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

How many people are killed or injured in collisions involving drinking drivers?

From 2005 to 2009, on average each year over 115 people were killed and over 1800 people were injured in collisions involving at least one driver who had consumed alcohol prior to the crash. Specifically, in 2009, 112 people were killed and 1473 were injured.

How big of an issue is drug impaired driving?

A recent Canadian study of alcohol and drug use among drivers found that drug use in nighttime drivers exceeded that of alcohol use.

How many drinks does it take to be impaired?

Impairment begins with the first drink. The effects of alcoholic drinks vary greatly because the rate of absorption and blood alcohol concentration (BAC) attained vary from person to person due to factors such as weight, amount of fat tissue, and stomach contents.

Is beer or wine less impairing than hard liquor?

Impairment is not determined by the type of drink but rather by the amount of alcohol ingested over a specific period of time. There is a similar amount of alcohol in such standard drinks as a 12-ounce glass of beer, a 4-ounce glass of wine, and 1.25 ounces of 80-proof liquor.

What happens if you refuse to comply with a lawful demand made by a Peace Officer?

Refusing to comply with a lawful demand can result in a Criminal Code charge under section 254 of the Criminal Code. A lawful demand includes a demand for breath, both at the roadside and for a breathalyzer test; a demand for blood sample; a demand for physical coordination tests, and a demand for a drug evaluation.

What is the Mandatory Ignition Interlock Program?

Drivers who are convicted of having twice the legal limit or higher of alcohol in their bloodstreams will be required to attach alcohol sensors to their vehicle ignitions before they are allowed to drive again. This program will also apply to drivers convicted of refusing to provide a breath or blood sample as well as repeat offenders over the past 10 years.

How are drug-impaired drivers determined?

Drivers who are pulled over on suspicion of drug impairment may be asked to complete the Standardized Field Sobriety Tests (SFST), which check for divided attention impairment. These tests help give an officer the reasonable and probable grounds to then ask for a drug recognition investigation.

Where can I find more information about impaired driving in Alberta?

Additional information and resources can be found on the Saferoads website at: <http://www.saferoads.com/drivers/impaired.html>. Additional information can be found at: <http://www.aadac.com/default.asp> and <http://www.ccsa.ca/Eng/KnowledgeCentre/OurPublications/Pages/FAQsandFactSheets.aspx>

IV. Advertising for Impaired Driving Campaign

**Government
of Alberta** ■

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