

DON'T DO IT

How Impaired Driving Can Wreck Your Life



A 100-Year Problem

Since the era that cars were first mass produced, there have been issues with impaired driving. The first such offense came in 1897 in London.

In the states, the first drunk-driving law was passed in New York in 1910. Other states followed suit, eventually introducing blood alcohol content levels as standards for the crime.

Many worldwide advances have been made over the past century, including the introduction of the breathalyzer in 1953 and the influential lobbying efforts of the Mothers Against Drunk Driving in the 1970s.

While much progress is still needed to make our streets and roads safer, the efforts of advocacy groups, law enforcement and the media continue to make strides in their objective.

MADD

Candy Lightner founded MADD in 1980 after her 13-year-old daughter was killed by a drunk driver.

The driver had three previous drunk-driving convictions and was out on bail from a hit-and-run arrest two days earlier, according to MADD's website.

Over the next decade, MADD played a vital role in securing legislation that increased the penalties for driving under the influence of alcohol, as well as raising the minimum drinking age in many states.

TODAY'S LAWS

The legal drinking age is 21 everywhere in the United States today.

People convicted of impaired driving can face a

range of punishments, from jail time and pricey fines to loss of their driver's licenses.

Some offenders are ordered to have ignition interlock devices installed in their vehicles, requiring them to

breathe into a sensor attached to their dashboards. If the driver's blood alcohol concentration is above a certain limit, the car won't start.

Despite all the progress that has been made in the fight

against drunk driving, the problem still remains a serious one.

Overcoming it will require community-wide collaboration to make a positive change in driver behavior.



The Consequences

We all know impaired drivers aren't just putting themselves in danger. They also are endangering everyone who shares the road with them.

No penalty may seem too stiff for a driver who takes the life of another innocent person. There are a range of punishments that drivers arrested for impaired operation of a vehicle have to face.

FIRST-TIME CONVICTIONS

The punishment for a first-time, non-injury DUI is, in many states, punishable by a minimum number of days to be served in jail complemented by a hefty fine.

Licenses also typically can be suspended for up to a year and the driver is generally put onto a type of probation for a few years, meaning another arrest during that time period could result in much longer jail time.

PRIOR CONVICTIONS

Drivers with prior DUI convictions are not let off as easy.

Judges are privy to prior arrest records and may take into consideration any past drinking and driving

offenses.

If an arrested driver appears to be a further threat to others, more serious jail time or larger fines could be on the table. Each state is different, but penalties and fines generally are even more serious when blood alcohol content is .15 or more. (The legal limit is .08.)

DUI SCHOOL

One of the prevention pieces put in place for people arrested for impaired driving is DUI school, also known as mandatory alcohol education. Such programs are focused on teaching offenders about alcohol dependency and the consequences of DUIs.

These types of programs are different from state to state but can last up to 30 months for repeat offenders.

Factors in deciding the length and intensity of the program can include whether or not a driver has any prior DUI charges, the driver's blood alcohol content at the time of arrest and whether someone was seriously injured or killed during the accident.



Drunk Driving Statistics



An eye-opening statistic can help cause positive change. To get people talking about — and acting on — drunk driving prevention, below is a list of statistics compiled from the foremost authorities on the topic.

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Share them face-to-face with friends and family members, or post them to your social media accounts. The more people who stand up against drunk driving, the less acceptable it will become in our society.

And while sharing the information below is a great first step, you also may be motivated to volunteer your time to

make a difference.

Organizations such as Mothers Against Drunk Driving are continuously looking for volunteers interested in lending their time and skills to the effort.

You can sign up with organizations like MADD on the Internet or in person at your local branch.

- People drive drunk almost

300,000 times every day, but fewer than 4,000 are arrested, according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation's 2013 study on crime in the United States.

- The rate of drunk driving is highest among 21- to 25-year-olds at 23.4 percent, according to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

• Another study by SAMHSA found that in 2012, 29.1 million people admitted to driving under the influence of alcohol.

- In the United States, the number of drunk driving deaths has been cut in half since Mothers Against Drunk Driving was founded in 1980, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety

Administration.

• Car crashes are the leading cause of death for teenagers. One quarter of these crashes involve a driver who is an underage drinker, according to the NHTSA.

- An average drunk driver has driven drunk 80 times before his or her first arrest, reports the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Ignition Interlock Laws

One of the most recent breakthroughs in the battle against drunk driving has been the introduction of ignition interlock laws.

These are devices that are installed in the vehicles of people who have been convicted of driving while impaired. They prevent operation of the vehicle by anyone with a blood alcohol concentration above a specified safe level (usually 0.02 percent to 0.04 percent), according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

When installed, the CDC reports that interlocks are associated with about a 70 percent reduction in arrest rates for impaired driving.

THE ORIGIN

In December 2013, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration released a comprehensive report that encouraged states to adopt ignition interlock for first-time convicted drunk drivers.

All interlock devices must now be certified to meet NHTSA specifications for both accuracy and dependability. When properly calibrated, ignition interlocks are accurate enough to determine the presence of alcohol and its concentration, the NHTSA states.

HOW IT WORKS

An offender is responsible for all costs associated with



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the installation and monitoring of a interlock system unless otherwise determined by a judge. System costs vary by state.

In Illinois, for example, an offender must pay \$85 to a vendor for installation and then \$80 per month. There also is a \$30 non-refundable monthly monitoring fee payable to the Secretary of State's Office.

Here is how an ignition interlock system works:

- Driver blows into the mouthpiece of the device;
- The fuel cell inside the device analyzes the blood alcohol concentration;
- If the concentration is below the pre-determined limit, the car will start;
- If it is not, the car will not start;
- The system also requires

blows throughout the drive in random intervals; and

- Anyone driving the vehicle must use the device.

STATE BY STATE

Twenty one states have mandatory ignition interlock provisions for all offenses, according to the American Legislative Exchange Council. They are Alabama, Alaska,

Arizona, Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Kansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Tennessee, Utah, Virginia, Washington and West Virginia.

Interlock laws vary by state. Check with your state's department of transportation to find out the laws in your area.

DUI vs. DWI

Driving under the influence (DUI) and driving while impaired (DWI) both refer to the illegal act of operating a vehicle while impaired by alcohol or drugs.

Some states classify them as separate crimes while others do not make a distinction between the two. When there is a difference between the two, DWI is generally the more serious charge. Blood alcohol concentration at the time of the event is most often the differentiating factor.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF IMPAIRED DRIVING

The law prohibiting drunk driving is most commonly known as DUI. States identify the offense in different ways. Here are some examples:

- DUIL (driving under the influence of liquor)
- DWI (driving while intoxicated)
- OMVI (operating a motor vehicle while intoxicated)
- OWI (operating while intoxicated), or
- OUI (operating under the influence).

ELEMENTS OF DUI & DWI

You don't have to be driving your vehicle to receive a DUI or DWI. The "operational" requirement of a charge can occur while someone is sleep-

ing behind the wheel or driving a truck, motorcycle, car, golf cart, bicycle, tractor or horse.

Some states have tough stances on DUIs or DWIs, arresting people even if found in the car with the engine turned off and the keys in their

pocket.

In others, you have to be operating your vehicle on a public road to be arrested for drunk driving.

Additionally, some states will hand out a DUI or DWI even if you're on your own

personal property.

PENALTIES

Whether called a DUI or a DWI in your state, DMV.org features a state-by-state look at your specific area's penalties for

the crime.

Check out <http://www.dmv.org/automotive-law/dui.php> for this tool. Click on a state and read more about the specific definition of the offense as well as costs, penalties and resources in your state.



Designated Driver Programs

“I think I can make it.” “If I leave my car here, I’m afraid it will get towed.” “My house is only a few blocks away.” Do any of these statements sound familiar?

Alcohol clouds the judgment usually used to make big decisions — ones such as whether or not we can safely operate a vehicle.

The importance of these types of decisions is magnified when the potential for harming others is a key factor. Someone who might never soberly consider making such a poor decision may have lower inhibitions when drinking, making the same decision a tough one to carry out.

Enter the designated driver.

These helpful friends help take the decision-making out of getting home safely. If you’re putting together a night on the town, be sure to plan ahead on finding a ride from someone who isn’t planning to drink.

This can include a friend, family member, public transportation, a taxi or a ride-share service.

DESIGNATED DRIVER PROGRAMS

There are many national initiatives aimed at promoting the act of designated driving. Here are a couple coordinated by Mothers Against Drunk Driving:

National Football League:



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Since 2009, MADD and the National Football League have worked together to launch public service announcements and conduct on-field advocacy to help spread the word that the designated driver is a group’s

most vital teammate.

Ride-share partners: MADD also has partnered with ride-share services Uber and Lyft. Doing so has given people more options when it comes to choosing a safe way to get home.

GIVE THE GIFT

The next time you plan a night out with friends, why not give the gift of being a designated driver? People who decide to do so can find it extremely rewarding to

know that your friends are in good hands for the night.

Volunteer yourself to get everyone home safely. You can even download a designated driver coupon on MADD’s website that you can hand out to your friends.

How to Spot a Drunk Driver

Police officers patrolling the streets for public safety are trained to look for indications of drunk drivers. These can include both obvious and not-so-obvious signs of impairment.

But what should you, the concerned citizen, do if you spot a drunk driver? How can you help police officers keep impaired people from getting behind the wheel?

SIGNS OF IMPAIRMENT

First, get to know the many driving cues that may signal a drunk driver. These can include:

- Reckless driving or weaving;
- Going left of center or driving over the shoulder;
- Driving too slowly;
- Braking erratically or stopping for no apparent reason;
- Slow response to traffic signals;
- Driving without headlights at nighttime; and
- Nearly striking objects, curbs or other vehicles.

WHAT TO DO

After you have spotted an impaired driver, it's time to take action. The longer you wait to call the authorities, the higher the chance of someone getting hurt.

If you're driving with someone else in the car, ask him or her to take notice of the license plate number of the vehicle in question. If you're by



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yourself, try to make out the plate number and remember the main details of the car, including color, make and model.

Then pull your vehicle over and call 911, giving the exact location of the vehicle and all

key information you can remember. Your vigilance will hopefully lead to safer streets.

WHAT NOT TO DO

Now that you know what to do, there also are actions you

should never take in the case of spotting an impaired driver.

Never try to take matters into your own hands by pulling over or passing the suspected vehicle. This could irritate the other driver or

cause a collision.

It is best to keep your distance and follow the steps outlined in the section above.

It is best to stay far away from dangerous drivers to keep yourself and others as safe as possible.