



# 101 Critical Days of Summer



## Safety Tip #15 – Drinking & Driving

Kids are going back to school, football is back on television and Labor Day is upon us signaling the end of summer. Most everyone will be visiting friends and family, enjoying one last barbecue together. We all know that the crisp fall weather is coming followed by the dreaded white stuff we all love to shovel. So while we're barbecuing we'll have just one drink, maybe two, well ok maybe three. You think, "I only have a short drive home, I'll be ok". We are not as invincible as we think we are. For those that are involved in an alcohol-related crash, their lives and the lives of their families will be changed forever. So think about your family before you get behind the wheel. Think about how their lives would be changed if you got into an accident and how your life would be changed if they were with you and something happened to them.



Every single injury and death caused by drunk driving is totally preventable. Although the proportion of crashes that are alcohol-related has dropped dramatically in recent decades, there are far too many preventable accidents. Unfortunately, in spite of great progress, alcohol-impaired driving remains a serious national problem that tragically affects many victims annually. It's easy to forget that dry statistics represent real people and real lives.

On average someone is killed by a drunk driver every 45 minutes. In 2008, an estimated 11,773 people died in drunk driving related crashes—a decline of 9.8 percent from the 13,041 drunk driving related fatalities of 2007.

Fifty to 75 percent of drunk drivers whose licenses are suspended continue to drive.

About three in every ten Americans will be involved in an alcohol-related crash at some time in their lives.

It's not a question of whether you are legally intoxicated; it's a question of whether or not it is **safe** to drive when you have consumed **any** amount of alcohol. Research shows that impairment begins long before a person reaches the blood alcohol concentration level necessary to be guilty of drunken driving.

### The Legal Limit

In all 50 states, the legal limit for drunk driving is a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) level of .08. A 120-pound woman can reach a .08 BAC level after only two drinks and a 180-pound man can be at .08 after only four drinks.

A "drink" is either one shot of liquor, a five-ounce glass of wine or one beer, all of which contain the same amount of alcohol.

At a .08 BAC level, drivers are so impaired that they are 11 times more likely to have a single-vehicle crash than drivers with no alcohol in their system.

But 25 years of research has shown that some impairment begins for both males and females even after one drink.

### 0.02-0.03 BAC Level

At the .02 blood alcohol concentration level, experiments have demonstrated that people exhibit some loss of judgment, begin to relax and feel good. But tests have also shown that drivers at the .02 level experience a decline in visual functions, affecting their ability to track a moving object, and experience a decline in the ability to perform two tasks at the same time.



These changes may be very subtle and barely noticeable to the person who has had only one drink, but in an emergency situation while behind the wheel of a vehicle, they could cause the driver to react (or not react) as they would without having had a drink.



**0.04-0.06 BAC:** Feeling of well-being, relaxation, lower inhibitions, sensation of warmth, euphoria. Some minor impairment of reasoning and memory, lowering of caution (a release of inhibition). Your behavior may become exaggerated and emotions intensified (Good emotions are better, bad emotions are worse). Some people experience loss of small-muscle control – such as being able to focus their eyes quickly.

**0.07-0.09 BAC:** Slight impairment of balance, speech, vision, reaction time, and hearing. Euphoria. Judgment and self-control are reduced, and caution, reason and memory are impaired, .08 is legally impaired and it is illegal to drive at this level. You will probably believe that you are functioning better than you really are.

**0.10-0.125 BAC:** Significant impairment of motor coordination and loss of good judgment. Speech may be slurred; balance, vision, reaction time and hearing will be impaired. Euphoria.

**0.13-0.15 BAC:** Gross motor impairment and lack of physical control. Blurred vision and major loss of balance. Euphoria is reduced and dysphoria (anxiety, restlessness) is beginning to appear. Judgment and perception are severely impaired.



**0.16-0.19 BAC:** Dysphoria predominates, nausea may appear. The drinker has the appearance of a "sloppy drunk."

**0.20 BAC:** Feeling dazed, confused or otherwise disoriented. May need help to stand or walk. If you injure yourself you may not feel the pain. Some people experience nausea and vomiting at this level. The gag reflex is impaired and you can choke if you do vomit. Blackouts are likely at this level so you may not remember what has happened.

**0.25 BAC:** All mental, physical and sensory functions are severely impaired. Increased risk of asphyxiation from choking on vomit and of seriously injuring yourself by falls or other accidents. <http://bloodalcoholcalculator.org/>

**0.30 BAC:** STUPOR. You have little comprehension of where you are. You may pass out suddenly and be difficult to awaken.

**0.35 BAC:** Coma is possible. This is the level of surgical anesthesia.

**0.40 BAC and up:** Onset of coma, and possible death due to respiratory arrest.

Play it smart during weekends and holidays (and every day). If you plan to party away from home – and this includes on the water – be sure to appoint a designated driver for the car or operator of the boat.

**Whatever you do, DON'T get behind the wheel if you've been drinking!**



Be safe this weekend and let's close out the 101 Critical Days of Summer without any mishaps this weekend!!!

Have a great Labor Day Weekend - Your Risk Management Staff!!!

**This document was derived from multiple sources. Sources are available upon request in the 157 ARW/SE Office.**