



Impairment Begins With The First Drink

An Alcohol Awareness Fact Sheet

Know the law:

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration defines a fatal traffic crash as being alcohol-related if either a driver or a non-occupant (e.g., pedestrian) has a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of 0.01 grams per deciliter (g/dl) or greater in a police-reported traffic crash. Persons with a BAC of 0.08 g/dl or greater involved in fatal crashes may be considered intoxicated. This is the legal limit of intoxication in Texas. In fact, the Penal Code (PC§49.01) defines "intoxicated as: A) not having the normal use of mental or physical faculties by reason of the introduction of alcohol, or B) having an alcohol concentration of 0.08 or more." Minors are defined as "a person under 21 years of age". (Section 106.01, Alcoholic Beverage Code, Section 106.041 Driving Under the Influence of Alcohol by Minor. [TABC Minor Under age 21] Zero Tolerance for minors is the law in Texas.

Know the effects:





Many television beer commercials are entertaining. Dancing the twist to open a bottle of beer, dancing with a dog in order to get a bottle of beer, and of course the reptilian antics in and around the lily pads. As entertaining as the commercials are, the results of drinking alcoholic beverages and then driving a vehicle can be devastating. Why does drinking and driving have such potential consequences?

- ✗ Alcohol blocks the messages going to the brain and alters a person's perceptions and emotions, vision, hearing, and coordination.
- ✗ Alcohol is a central nervous system depressant. It affects virtually every organ in the body and chronic use can lead to numerous preventable diseases, including alcoholism.
- ✗ Alcohol lowers inhibitions and impairs judgement which can lead to risky behaviors.
- ✗ Alcohol also hinders coordination, slows reaction time, dulls senses, and blocks memory functions.
- ✗ The severity of a crash increases with alcohol involvement.

Remember that alcohol is not glamour and adventure.

Get the facts:

Which Has More Alcohol?

12 Oz. Beer	=		= .54 oz. Alcohol
1 Oz. Whiskey	=		= .40 oz. Alcohol
4 Oz. Wine	=		= .48 oz. Alcohol
12 Oz. Wine Cooler	=		= .60 oz. Alcohol

Source: Texas Drug & Alcohol Driving Awareness Program

For young drivers 15 to 20 years old, crashes involving alcohol are higher among males than among females.

Source: NHTSA

Based on Department of Public Safety records for 1998 a fatal DWI involved crash has the highest probability of occurring on a rural part of a US & State Route between 2:00 a.m. and 2:59 a.m. and will most likely involve a male driver, age 21.

Know the risks:

- ✗ Drivers are less likely to use safety belts when they have been drinking.
- ✗ A woman drinking an equal amount of alcohol in the same period of time as a man of an equivalent weight may have a higher blood alcohol level than that man.

Factors that influence BAC:

- ✓ **Rate of Absorption** - 70-80% of alcohol is absorbed in the small intestine. Several factors influence the rate of absorption.
 - Strength of alcohol
 - Food
 - Carbonation
 - Other ingredients of beverage
 - Emotions
 - Male/female differences
- ✓ **Drinking Rate** - the faster alcohol is consumed, the faster it reaches the bloodstream.
- ✓ **Body Weight** - a larger person has more blood and fluids and alcohol will be more diluted.
- ✓ **Size of Drink** - the larger the drink, the more effect it will have.

Be prepared:

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, drivers under the influence of alcohol often display certain characteristics when on the road. Always be alert and watch for the following behaviors:

- Watch For:**
- making wide turns
 - weaving, swerving, drifting or straddling the center line
 - nearly striking an object or vehicle
 - driving on the wrong side of the road
 - driving at a very slow speed
 - driving with high beams on
 - stopping without cause
 - braking erratically
 - slow response to traffic signals
 - turning abruptly or illegally
 - driving with headlights off

- Take Action:**
- ✓ If you are in front of the impaired driver, turn right at the nearest intersection and let him or her pass.
 - ✓ If the impaired driver is in front of you, stay a safe distance behind.
 - ✓ If the impaired driver is coming at you, slow down, move to the right and stop.
 - ✓ If possible, call and report suspected impaired driver.



Remember these important facts!

- ✓ Don't drink alcohol and drive
- ✓ Don't ride with **ANYONE** who has been drinking alcohol
- ✓ Wear your safety belt correctly and buckle up everyone in vehicle
- ✓ A designated driver drinks only non-alcoholic beverages

Source: Passenger Safety Education