



**DRINKING DRIVING
COUNTERATTACK**

Drinking and Driving

Trends

Drinking and driving trends (2003 – 2007)*

- Approximately 120 people have died and 3,200 people have been injured annually in alcohol-related collisions over the last five years.
- Approximately 26 per cent of motor vehicle fatalities over the last five years were related to drinking and driving.
- Consistent with previous years, 62 per cent of all alcohol-related incidents occurred on weekends (Friday, Saturday and Sunday).
- October is the month with the highest average impaired-driving incidents in a year, followed by November and December.
- The peak hours for alcohol-related crashes are between 9 p.m. and 3 a.m., which accounts for 48 per cent of all alcohol-related crashes.
- The 16 to 25 age group has the highest number of impaired drivers (accounting for 35 per cent of total impaired drivers) involved in alcohol-related crashes over the last five years.
- Males account for 81 per cent of all impaired drivers involved in alcohol-related crashes over the last five years.
- 5,100 alcohol-related collisions have occurred annually on average over the last five years, resulting in more than \$140 million in claims costs.

Facts about drugs and medications

Be very cautious when driving while using medications or drugs. Many prescription medicines and over-the-counter drugs affect the skills necessary for driving, and may render you impaired under the Criminal Code. Drugs for cold, flu, allergies and nausea can cause your attention to wander, slow your reaction time and make you drowsy. When combined with alcohol, these drugs can be dangerous. Be sure you read labels carefully and check with your doctor or pharmacist about whether it is safe to drive while taking specific drugs. There are some instances where it is essential for people to take prescribed medications; for example, if they have certain medical conditions such as diabetes or epilepsy.

Drinking Driving CounterAttack

Thirty years ago, there were over 300 fatalities from alcohol-related collisions (1976 — the year prior to CounterAttack starting). Over the last five years (2003 – 2007) this has decreased to approximately 120 people annually.

Despite the progress in making drinking and driving unacceptable, it still remains a serious problem. CounterAttack police roadchecks help protect people from the harmful consequences of impaired driving through the enforcement of all relevant laws and regulations. Police enforcement occurs year-round, with increased roadchecks during July/August and again during the December holiday season.

*Averages are based on police-reported data.

Alcohol Myths & Facts

As long as I am under .08, I'll be okay to drive:

False. Impairment begins with the first drink. By the time you reach .02 you'll have difficulty attending to more than one task and maintaining your attention and alertness. By the time you reach .04, your ability to react to the unforeseen will be affected as will your judgment about speed and safe distances.

If I eat a big meal before drinking, I'll be okay to drive:

False. While it's always a good idea to eat while drinking alcoholic beverages, a full stomach is not an effective defence against impaired driving.

Coffee, food or fresh air will sober me up enough to drive home:

False. No amount of hot coffee, cold showers or fresh air will induce sobriety. The only cure is time. And you might be surprised to learn it takes about six hours for your body to eliminate all the alcohol from a blood/alcohol level reading of .08.

It's mostly young people who are the problem:

False. Males over the age of 25 account for approximately 46 per cent of all impaired driving collisions. While young drivers are certainly over-represented in impaired crashes, research shows that it's the 25-plus male population that presents an even greater risk.

Protect yourself from drinking drivers

- Choose a designated driver before going out, keep money aside for a bus or taxi, or call a friend.
- Refuse to ride with drivers who may be impaired. Ask to be let out of the car if necessary.
- Take a stand and don't let people drive who are drinking alcohol.
- The risk of crashing increases with each alcoholic drink consumed. Alcohol affects your judgment, reaction time, coordination and visual function; your ability to steer, track moving objects, brake appropriately; and ability to control your speed and lane position.
- Plan ahead to get home safely.

Statement of Limitation

The information in this publication is intended to provide general information only and is not intended to provide legal or professional advice. We have used plain language to help readers understand some of the laws affecting the topic of this publication at the date it was written. You should follow the more detailed wording and requirements of current applicable statutes and regulations, even if they contradict the wording and requirements set out in this publication.

My insurance will cover me if I drink and then crash my car:

False. If you drive while impaired, you're in breach of your insurance policy. That means you're 100 per cent liable if you damage someone else's property or injure them.

There isn't much chance that I'll be caught if I drink and drive, and even if I am, the penalties aren't very severe:

False. In the past year, police handed out 38,000 roadside suspensions and almost 10,000 90-day administrative driving prohibitions (ADP) to drinking drivers. If you have two previous roadside suspensions or one previous ADP, you'll also be required to attend an alcohol rehabilitation program and you may be required to install an alcohol interlock device in your vehicle. A criminal drinking and driving conviction can also land you in jail, affect job opportunities and your ability to travel outside of Canada.

Driving stoned is less risky than driving drunk:

False. Numerous studies have shown that "stoned" drivers can be every bit as dangerous as drunk drivers. Depending on what they've smoked, swallowed or injected, their impairment could range from slowed reflexes and flawed depth perception to hallucinations, psychosis and seizures. New legislation now allows police to test for drug-impairment and charge drivers who refuse to provide blood, saliva or urine samples when requested by police officers.