



# IMPAIRED DRIVING

## *Issue*

Alcohol-impaired driving is a persistent factor in crash fatalities and injuries on our roadways, accounting for 30% of deaths each year on average.

## *Impact*

In 2021, 13,384 people were killed in motor vehicle crashes involving drivers with a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of .08% or higher. This is a more than 14% increase from 2020.

## *Solutions*

Laws, Technology,  
and Roadway Safety  
Infrastructure

### **Ignition Interlock Devices (IIDs) for All-Offenders and Open Container Laws**

### **Safety Technologies and Improved Safety Standards Can Protect Vehicle Occupants and Other Road Users**

- According to research from IIHS released in July 2020, impaired driving prevention technology has the potential to drastically reduce impaired driving fatalities. An updated analysis by IIHS finds that impaired driving prevention systems could save 10,158 lives each year in the U.S., accounting for more than 25% of road fatalities, when all vehicles are equipped with the technology.
- Proven collision avoidance systems in vehicles including AEB, LDW, BSD, rear AEB, and rear-cross traffic alert should be required.

### **Road Safety Infrastructure and the Safe System Approach**



# IMPAIRED DRIVING

## The Facts

- NHTSA has identified alcohol-impaired driving as one of “three major behavioral factors,” that explain some traffic fatality increases from 2020 to 2021.
- An average of one alcohol-impaired driving fatality occurred every 39 minutes in 2021.
- In 2019, the estimated total comprehensive costs of drunk driving were \$296 billion annually. Accounting for inflation only, that amounts to more than \$352 billion in 2023 dollars.
- Concern about impaired driving is extensive with 80% of respondents “very” or “extremely” concerned about drunk or drug impaired driving, according to a December 2021 opinion poll commissioned by Advocates and conducted by ENGINE Insights.
- A common misconception is that most people who are convicted of their first drunk driving offense are social drinkers who made one mistake. However, studies show that the average first offender will have driven drunk 87 times before getting arrested.
- According to the CDC, adult drivers admitted they drank too much and got behind the wheel approximately 127 million times in 2020, which equals over 347,000 incidents of drinking and driving each day. However, only about 1 million, or approximately one percent of those 127 million episodes resulted in an arrest for driving under the influence that year.
- Nationwide between 2006 and 2020, IIDs prevented 3.78 million attempts to drive drunk, according to a 2022 report from Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD). This included 390,456 attempts in 2020, more than 1,000 every day.
- There is clear public support for IIDs for all convicted drunk drivers, with surveys showing between 69 and 88 percent of respondents in favor of requiring IIDs for all convicted driving under the influence (DUI) offenders, even if it's their first conviction.



- 82% of offenders themselves believe the IID was effective in preventing them from driving after drinking.
- When IIDs are installed, they are associated with an approximately 70% reduction in repeat offenses for impaired driving.
- A 2022 MADD poll found nine of 10 Americans support technology that is integrated into a car's electronics to prevent drunk driving.

[Click here to learn more](#)



# IMPAIRED DRIVING

## The Facts

### .05% BAC LAWS

At .05% BAC, a driver exhibits signs of cognitive and physical impairment including reduced coordination and ability to track moving objects, difficulty steering, and diminished response to emergency driving situations. Employed around the world to curb drunk driving with approximately 100 countries instituting .05% or lower BAC policy, this proven countermeasure remains under-used in the U.S. In 2018, Utah became the first state to enforce a .05% BAC limit. NHTSA's review of the impact of the new law in Utah during the first year that the law went into effect has yielded some excellent results. Between 2016 and 2019, the fatal crash rate decreased by 19.8% and the fatality rate per vehicle miles traveled dropped by 18.3%. Additionally, the number of drivers testing positive for any alcohol declined by 14.6%, and alcohol-impaired driving arrests did not climb sharply. Further, alcohol sales from fiscal year (FY) 2012 through 2018 increased and the trend continued in FY 2022. Similar patterns occurred in sales tax revenues from restaurants, rental cars, hotels, and resorts, as well as in air travel into the state and state and national park visits. If all states lowered the BAC limit while driving to .05%, the U.S. could experience an 11% or greater decline in fatal alcohol-involved crashes, saving 1,790 lives annually. Public health researchers, experts, a coalition of safety advocates and the NTSB agree that driving at .05% BAC or higher is dangerous and state laws lowering BAC will reduce the horrific toll of deaths and injuries caused by drunk driving. While not yet rated in this report, all states should adopt a .05% BAC law.

### MARIJUANA IMPAIRED DRIVING

States have enacted and continue to advance measures to permit marijuana use, medical, recreational or both. While it is definitive that marijuana use causes impairment, identifying the causal link between marijuana use, crashes, fatalities and injuries is unresolved. Furthermore, when drug and alcohol use are combined, known as "polyuse," impairment can be amplified. Our priorities to curb impaired driving include: requirements for advanced impaired driving prevention technology and crash avoidance technology as standard in all new cars; acceleration of research to identify a causal link between marijuana use, impairment, and crashes; determination of a federal impairment standard for marijuana impaired driving (noting that current research does not support a per se level); development of verified roadside testing technology; improvement of data collection and analysis; and, allocation of adequate resources for labs and law enforcement training.



# IMPAIRED DRIVING

Advocacy



**“I was almost killed by a suspected drunk driver.  
Now I have a new mission in life.”**

3/2/23

## CRASH TURNS REPORTER INTO NATIONAL LEADER IN FIGHT AGAINST DRUNK DRIVING

Tess Rowland was living the dream. At just 22 years old, she already was a respected reporter for her local ABC affiliate in Florida. On May 4, 2021, Tess was heading to work like she did on any other weekday, but then her life changed forever. Tess was struck head on by a drunk driver who was driving the wrong way. The crash totaled her vehicle and required her to go through seven surgeries which included four plates and twenty-two screws. She continues to feel the impacts of the crash to this day and credits the crash avoidance technology in the vehicle with helping save her life.

[Mothers Against Drunk Driving \(MADD\)](#) helped her on the road to recovery, and Tess is now giving back to MADD. After becoming the new MADD president in 2023, she has been advocating across the nation for laws, including all-offender ignition interlock device requirements and .05 percent BAC limits, as well as vehicle based technologies to prevent impaired driving crashes.

## LOOKING TO 2024

MADD, [Advocates](#) and other national and local groups will continue efforts to enact .05 percent BAC limits in multiple states, including Washington where the governor has already noted support. Efforts at the federal level include urging the U.S. DOT to issue a rule for impaired driving prevention technology, as directed in the IIJA. Equipping vehicles with the lifesaving systems is an ongoing focus of MADD, Advocates and many other partners who are dedicated to ending impaired driving. More than 40 organizations and companies sent a [letter](#) urging the U.S. DOT to move forward with the rulemaking in October 2023. We will persist this multi-year and multi-faceted lobbying campaign in 2024.



*Tess Rowland, MADD president*



*Tess at a bill signing for an all-offender ignition interlock device law in South Carolina on July 12, 2023*

