



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 2022, 13,524 people were killed in motor vehicle crashes involving drivers with a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of .08% or higher. The fatality rate for alcohol-impaired driving fatalities remains 35% higher than in 2019.

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, 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

- An average of one alcohol-impaired driving fatality occurred every 39 minutes in 2022.
- In 2019, the total comprehensive cost of drunk driving over the .08% BAC limit was estimated at nearly \$296 billion. Updated for inflation alone, in 2024, the economic costs would be \$363 billion.
- 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 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), adult drivers admitted they drove despite drinking too much 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 1% 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 figure included 390,456 attempts in 2020, which is equivalent to 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% 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 DUI offenders believe the IID was effective in preventing them from driving after drinking.
- A University of Pennsylvania study found that requiring IIDs for all drunk-driving convictions was associated with 15% fewer alcohol-involved crash deaths, compared with states with less stringent requirements. According to the study, “Interlocks are a life-saving technology that merit wider use.”



- A 2022 MADD poll found:
 - Nine of 10 Americans support technology that is integrated into a car’s electronics to prevent drunk driving.
 - 82% supported a Congressional mandate for drunk driving prevention technology in all new cars



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 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

While in 2024, some state ballot initiatives to permit recreational marijuana use failed, additional efforts will likely be pursued in the coming years. It is definitive that marijuana use causes impairment, but 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); incentivizing states to extend their open container law to include marijuana products and ensure their zero tolerance laws for drivers under age 21 include marijuana use; development of verified roadside testing technology; improvement of data collection and analysis; and, allocation of adequate resources for labs and law enforcement training.

[Click here to learn more](#)



IMPAIRED DRIVING

Advocacy

Father Honors Son's Legacy by Fighting Impaired Driving



[Father of police officer killed by drunken driver fights loophole in legislation](#)

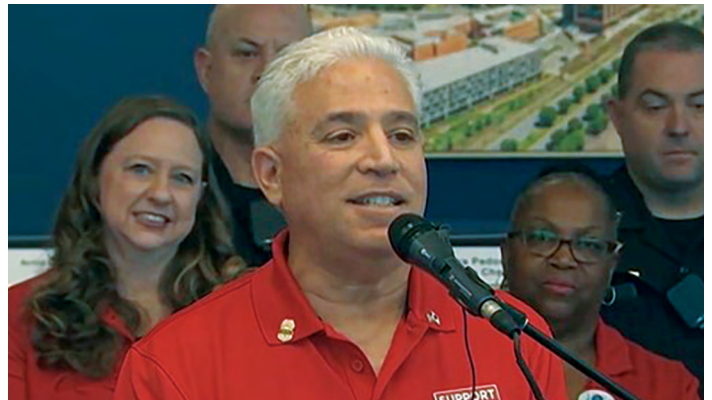
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CONTINUING THE MISSION OF A FALLEN HERO

Noah Aaron Leotta was a Montgomery County, Maryland native who loved his family, friends and community. While in college, he interned with the Montgomery County Police Department (MCPD) and Officer John Romack, known locally as the "DUI King." Through that experience, Noah learned about the wretched consequences of impaired driving. When he decided to enter the police academy, he did so with a special passion for confronting this deadly issue.

Two years after graduating from the academy, on December 3, 2015, Officer Leotta was part of an anti-drunk driving enforcement effort. When returning to his vehicle after a traffic stop, a drug and alcohol-impaired driver with a BAC level of 0.22% struck him while traveling at 50 miles per hour. Tragically, Noah passed away due to injuries sustained in the crash.

Knowing his life would never be the same, Rich became resolved to honor Noah's legacy by continuing his mission of fighting impaired driving. His work led to the enactment of Noah's Law in Maryland in 2016. It required an ignition IID for DUI convictions. Unfortunately, the law included a loophole for first offenders who received probation before judgment (PBJ). Rich successfully led the fight to remove this exception in the spring of 2024.



Rich Leotta participates in a news conference at the Maryland legislature in February 2024

LOOKING TO 2025

Rich's dedication to preventing impaired driving is not limited to Maryland. In Congress, together with MADD and Advocates, he pushes for action on the End Driving While Intoxicated (DWI) Act of 2024 (H.R. 8213) and for impaired driving prevention technology, as required in the Honoring Abbas Family Legacy to Terminate Drunk Driving (HALT) Act which was included in the IIJA (Pub. L. 117-58) in 2021. Rich will continue to serve as a member of MADD's Mid Atlantic Regional Advisory Board and Mid Atlantic Legislative Action Team.

