

What are the facts about drunk driving?



- About 3 in every 10 Americans will be involved in an alcohol-related crash at some time in their lives. (*Traffic Safety Facts 1999*. Washington, DC: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 2000)
- In 1999, 15,786 people were killed in alcohol-related crashes, representing an average of one alcohol-related fatality every 33 minutes. An estimated 308,000 people were injured in alcohol-related crashes. (*Traffic Safety Facts 1999*. Washington, DC: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 2000)
- In 1999, 30 percent of all traffic fatalities occurred in crashes in which at least one driver or nonoccupant, such as a pedestrian or bicyclist, had a blood alcohol content of 0.10 g/dl (grams per deciliter) or greater. Seventy percent of the 12,321 people killed in such crashes also were intoxicated. The remaining 30 percent were passengers, non-intoxicated drivers, or nonintoxicated nonoccupants. (*Traffic Safety Facts 1999*. Washington, DC: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 2000)
- It is estimated that alcohol was involved in 38 percent of fatal crashes and 7 percent of all crashes in 1999. (*Traffic Safety Facts 1999*. Washington, DC: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 2000)

- Fatally injured drivers with BAC levels of 0.10 g/dl or greater were six times more likely to have a prior conviction for driving while intoxicated than fatally injured sober drivers (12 percent and 2 percent, respectively). (*Traffic Safety Facts 1999*. Washington, DC: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 2000)

Resources for Information and Assistance

Mothers Against Drunk Driving
1-800-GET-MADD or 1-800-438-6233
www.madd.org

National Center for Victims of Crime
1-800-FYI-CALL or 1-800-394-2255
www.ncvc.org

National Organization for Victim Assistance
1-800-TRY-NOVA or 1-800-879-6682
www.try-nova.org

Office for Victims of Crime Resource Center
1-800-627-6872
TTY 1-877-712-9279
www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/ovcres/welcome.html

Remove Intoxicated Drivers-USA
514-393-HELP or 514-393-4357
www.rid-usa.org

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Drunk Driving Victimization

Office for Victims of Crime
OVC
Advocating for the Fair
Treatment of Crime Victims

THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR
Victims of Crime

What is drunk driving?

Alcohol and other drugs impair driving ability. The term “drunk driving” is intended to incorporate all forms of impairment. Many states require a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of 0.10 g/dl (grams per deciliter) before a driver is considered legally intoxicated, but driver reaction time slows with a BAC below 0.10. Vision and depth perception become distorted, and coordination and judgment are affected. Thus, more states have recently lowered the BAC criterion to 0.08, which is still well above the American Medical Association recommendation of 0.05 g/dl.

Drunk/drugged driving deaths and injuries are senseless acts. They are someone's fault (not “accidents”), so they always could have been prevented.

Drunk or drugged driving is a crime. Victims of drunk driving crashes are not hurt accidentally. The crime is the result of two choices made by a driver: to use alcohol or other drugs and to get behind the wheel of a vehicle. These choices are as dangerous to the public as using a deadly weapon and can be just as deadly.

Drunk driving is not a new problem. Thanks to the work of Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), Remove Intoxicated Drivers (RID), and other grassroots victim groups, public awareness of drinking and driving as preventable crime has grown, and the number of state and federal laws against impaired driving are increasing.



If You Are a Survivor of a Drunk Driving Incident

Whether you or a loved one is a drunk or drugged driving crash victim, you may be affected physically, emotionally, and financially. For injured victims and family members of those killed or injured, the first task is processing what has happened. Impaired driving crashes are sudden. They give you no time to prepare. It will take a lot of time just to grasp the shock and horror of the trauma. The physical and emotional suffering may seem to use up all the energy you have.

The knowledge that your body or that of a loved one was damaged or disfigured is very traumatic. If a loved one was killed, the sudden, violent death that took his or her life probably feels unlike any other loss you have experienced. You may feel vast swings in emotion. You may feel guilty for not being able to protect your loved one, even if you know it was not possible. Knowing the crash could have been prevented may be one of the most painful aspects of your grief. The injustice of the death and your involvement with the criminal justice system as a result of the crime may complicate your grief.

Whether you are an injured victim or a surviving family member or friend, you may experience a new sense of vulnerability. You may have nightmares or flashbacks about the crash. Your eating and sleeping habits may change. You may feel depressed or hopeless and lack interest in things you once enjoyed. Even though surviving a drunk driving crash is a terrible trauma, many survivors find that with time they can face life with new understanding and meaning.

Where can you get help?

Groups like MADD and RID were formed to support victims of drunk driving, reduce the number of deaths and injuries resulting from impaired driving crashes, and advocate for tougher legislation. You may want to call your local or state MADD or RID chapter or another crime victim assistance program in your community, or seek out counselors who understand the grief that follows this kind of loss and trauma. Advocates can provide you with information and a full range of victim support services, such as assistance through the criminal justice process. Victim assistance programs and trained professionals also can help you find out about crime victim rights in your state.

When a loved one has been injured or killed, the financial impact can be a second victimization. The costs of medical care, travel, phone bills, counseling, lost wages, and funerals can be overwhelming. All states now have crime victim compensation programs that reimburse victims' families for certain out-of-pocket expenses, including funeral expenses, medical expenses, lost wages, and other financial needs considered reasonable. All state victim compensation programs cover mental health counseling for survivors of someone killed. Many states provide emergency funds that are available within a few weeks of the crash. To be eligible for compensation, the crime must be reported to the police and the victim and victim's family must cooperate with the criminal justice system. Victim assistance programs in your community can provide you with compensation applications and additional information.

