



.05 BAC Safety Briefing Facts

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Decades of research show that .05% BAC laws can save lives on the roads.

(Howat, Sleet, Smith, 1991)

.05 BAC LAW AT-A-GLANCE

What .05 DOES

Saves lives

1700+ people saved every year if all states passed a .05 BAC

Deters people at ALL BAC levels from driving Even at high BACs

Separates drinking from driving

63% of Americans support .05

What .05 DOES NOT do

There is no evidence that it reduces drinking

In fact, per capita alcohol consumption in countries with a .05 BAC is the same or higher than in the US, but deaths are lower

It does not necessarily increase arrests

People make the right choice not to get behind the wheel when they have been drinking – primary prevention

How does a .05 BAC law prevent crashes?

A .05 BAC law has a **broad deterrent effect** because it helps prevent drinking drivers from getting behind the wheel in the first place. It does not necessarily result in more DUI arrests. (NTSB 2013)

Lowering the BAC law changes behavior at **all BAC levels** by reducing driving after drinking, so it is an effective intervention for preventing driving even at higher BAC levels. (Wagenaar et al, 2007)

Who supports a .05 BAC limit?

- NTSB
- National Safety Council
- Advocates for Auto and Highway Safety
- Mothers Against Drunk Driving
- National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine
- The World Health Organization (WHO)

Impairment by BAC and drinks (CDC and NHTSA/USDOT)

.02 BAC*	About 2 alcoholic drinks**	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decline in visual functions Decline in ability to perform two tasks at same time
.05 BAC*	About 3 alcoholic drinks**	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced coordination Reduced ability to track moving objects Difficulty steering Reduced response to emergency driving situations
.08 BAC*	About 4 alcoholic drinks**	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced ability to concentrate Short-term memory loss Difficulty controlling speed Reduced information processing capability Impaired perception

*Blood Alcohol Concentration measurement. **The number of drinks represents the approximate amount of alcohol that a 160-pound man would need to drink in one hour to reach the listed BAC in each category.

For drivers with BACs of .05%–.079%, the risk of being in a fatal crash (single-vehicle) is at least **seven times higher** than for drivers with no alcohol in their system. (Zador 2000, NIH/NIAAA 2001, Voas 2012)

By separating drinking and driving, a .05 BAC or lower limit would result in an estimated 11% decline in fatal alcohol crashes and save at least 1700 lives annually in the U.S.

CHOOSE ONE

- Drink
- Drive

NTSB

.05 BAC Safety Briefing Facts

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NTSB MOST WANTED LIST OF TRANSPORTATION SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS

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NTSB

What was the impact on safety of moving from .10 to .08?

A comprehensive 2017 independent research study shows that from 1982 to 2014, in 50 States and DC, lowering BAC from .10 to .08 resulted in a **10.4% reduction in alcohol-related fatalities, with no change in alcohol consumption**. This means that lowering the BAC to .08 in the U.S. has saved 1,736 lives annually. A total of 24,868 lives were saved between 1983 and 2014 due to lowering the BAC to .08. A .05 BAC or lower limit would result in an estimated 11% decline in fatal alcohol crashes and save at least 1,700 lives annually in the U.S. (NORC, 2017, *The National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine*, 2018).

What is the international experience with .05?

Approximately 100 countries have some type of .05 or lower BAC laws and, while their average alcohol consumption is the same or higher than the U.S., their alcohol-related deaths are lower.

Examples	 U.S. .08 BAC	 Sweden .02 BAC	 Netherlands .05 BAC
% alcohol related crash deaths*	31%	19%	19%
Average alcohol consumption (liters pure alcohol per capita)**	9.2	9.2	9.9

*Data from *Global Status Report on Road Safety 2015*

**From WHO World Health Statistics 2015

Twenty years of international studies have shown that when a country lowers BAC limits from .08 to .05, alcohol-related fatal and injury crashes **decrease between 5% and 10%** (Mann et al, 2001, Fell & Voas, 2006, and others).

Brief history of .08 BAC laws in the U.S.

Beginning in the 1970's, national efforts began to reduce alcohol-impaired driving. Even from the outset of the movement to adopt .10 BAC as the national standard, there were advocates for lower BAC levels. Utah and Oregon were the first states to pass a .08 BAC law in 1983. The grassroots movement started in the early 1980's, Federal grant funding to states began to be tied to .08 BAC laws in the 1990's, Congress adopted .08 BAC as the national illegal limit for impaired driving in 2000, and all 50 states and DC had .08 BAC as the illegal limit by 2005. In 2017, Utah enacted the first .05 BAC law in the United States.

Sources (hyperlinked for e-versions)

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