



National Safety Council

OUR DRIVING CONCERN

[www.txdrivingconcern.org](http://www.txdrivingconcern.org)

No.4

# IMPAIRED DRIVERS

**About every 20 minutes, someone is killed or hurt in Texas in a crash involving alcohol.**

**Alcohol is a factor in almost four of every ten work-related traffic crashes.**

*Texas Department of Transportation, 2004*



**Impaired Drivers Are Driving Up the Costs of Business.** Millions of motorists share Texas streets and highways every day. Impaired by alcohol, illicit drugs, over-the-counter medication and prescription drugs, many are in no condition to drive. Alcohol is cited as a contributing factor in almost half of all fatal traffic crashes in Texas, claiming more than 1,300 lives every year.

# The Sad End of Happy Hour

**W**hether it's referred to as drunk driving, driving while intoxicated (DWI) or driving under the influence, impaired driving simply means a person's ability to safely operate a moving vehicle is compromised by alcohol and other drugs that change the function of the brain and body. Judgment, depth perception, coordination and reaction time – all prerequisites for safely driving a car, truck, boat, motorcycle or other moving vehicle – are affected by alcohol, illegal drugs such as cocaine and marijuana, and prescription and over-the-counter medications.



**P**enalties for a first-time DWI conviction in Texas can include a \$2,000 fine, loss of driver's license for up to a year and up to six months in jail. Legal fees and other DWI-related expenses often total more than \$15,000.

*Texas Department of Transportation, 2006*

**I**n Texas, drivers are legally intoxicated and can be arrested and charged with DWI with a .08 blood or breath alcohol concentration (BAC). However, driving ability can be impaired below the legal alcohol limit, and law enforcement officers can arrest any driver suspected of impaired driving, regardless of the driver's BAC. Texas also has a zero tolerance law: for anyone under 21, it is illegal to drive with any evidence of alcohol.

**Texas leads the nation in traffic deaths where drivers had a BAC of .08 or higher, resulting in 1,354 fatalities in 2006.**

*National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 2008*

**Almost half of all fatal crashes in Texas involve alcohol.**

*Fatality Analysis Reporting System Encyclopedia, 2006*

**Seventy Texans are injured or killed in alcohol-related crashes every day.**

*Texas Department of Transportation, 2004*

**For every person killed in a crash due to alcohol or other drugs in Texas, there are 24 injuries and 266 crashes involving property damage.**

*Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse, 2002*

**Eliminating on- and off-the-job alcohol crashes could save Texas employers more than \$830 million a year.**

*Network of Employers for Traffic Safety, in 2008 dollars*

## **BUSINESS UNDER THE INFLUENCE**

What employees do after hours affects a company's bottom line – three times more fatal crashes involving impaired driving happen at night than during the day. Drivers between the ages of 21 and 44 – those of adult working age – are more likely than any other age group to be in fatal crashes where the BAC was .08 or higher.

Use of alcohol also greatly increases the chance of all on- and off-the-job injuries. American businesses bear much of their cost in the higher premiums paid for employer-based health insurance tied to alcohol problems. And over time, heavy drinking contributes to expensive medical conditions including liver disease, stroke, and cancer, which ultimately effects employer health care costs.

**100 EMPLOYEES**

Consider the effects of alcohol on the operations and expenses of a typical company with 100 employees:

**Among employees and dependents,  
21 people have drinking problems.**

**Three extra work days will be lost each month due to sickness, injury, and absence related to problem drinking. These lost days will cost an employer an average of \$5,020 per year in wages and \$39,241 in alcohol-related health care costs.**

**Two extra emergency room visits will cost \$2,383 plus \$5,307 for each day the patient is in the hospital.**

*George Washington University Medical Center,  
Ensuring Solutions to Alcohol Problems*

## HOW TO PROTECT YOUR EMPLOYEES AND YOUR BUSINESS

As an employer, you can help save lives by promoting safe driving on and off the job. Reducing the incidence of impaired driving can be a profitable investment.

- Acknowledge the connection between impaired driving and misuse of alcohol and other drugs, and adopt strategies that encourage employees and dependents who have problems with alcohol and other drugs to seek help through Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) and drug-free workplace programs.
- Consider the company benefits of establishing a workplace-based effort that contributes to impaired driving prevention. A workplace substance abuse prevention program can save up to \$26 for every \$1 spent. Identifying and dealing with an employee's substance abuse problem can save an employer \$13,514 per year in health care and related costs.
- Support the state's annual crackdown on impaired drivers. The Texas Department of Transportation conducts an annual statewide Drink, Drive, Go to Jail campaign each August, which combines advertising with stepped up enforcement of the state's DWI laws. This is an ideal time for your business to conduct an impaired driving education program and warn employees about the dangers of drunk driving and its expensive legal consequences.



**The National  
Safety Council  
recommends that all  
employers encourage  
employees and their  
families never to  
drink and drive.**

*Sources: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration 2005, 2007, 2008, Fatality Analysis Reporting System Encyclopedia 2006, Texas Department of Transportation 2004, 2006, Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse 2002, Network of Employers for Traffic Safety 2000 and the National Safety Council 2007.*



**FOR FREE RESOURCES AND MORE INFORMATION ON WHAT YOU CAN DO TO ENCOURAGE YOUR EMPLOYEES TO DRIVE SAFELY ON AND OFF THE JOB, VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT [www.txdrivingconcern.org](http://www.txdrivingconcern.org).**



**OUR DRIVING CONCERN**  
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