



**Sacramento, California Drunk Driving Press Conference Remarks
Alex Epstein, Director of Transportation Safety, National Safety
Council**

April 3, 2019

Thank you, Senator Hill for introducing legislation to make Californians safer.

We are so honored to join you today and to raise awareness about the crisis we are facing on our roads. Everyday day in this country, we lose more than 100 people to car crashes. 100 people. Every day.

At the National Safety Council, we work to eliminate preventable deaths at work, at home, and on the road. And we've been doing it for more than 100 years.

And when it comes to road safety, impairment remains a leading cause of crashes and fatalities.

Facing the impact impaired driving has had on each of the families here today, we know we have to do more to change our culture and expectations around drunk driving.

I want to applaud the NTSB for first raising the flag in 2013 by calling for states to lower the legal BAC.

It was controversial and provocative, but it was also scientifically sound.

Impaired driving has been one of the toughest obstacles to overcome in eliminating roadway fatalities, and science tells us that impairment doesn't begin at .08, or even at .05.



Impairment begins with first drink. Our countermeasures must reflect this fact.

It's great to be here with MADD. Their support ensures that the families here today, and so many others suffering the same heartbreak, won't be soon forgotten.

With NTSB, Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety, MADD and the National Safety Council all working together, I know we can make roads safer here in California, and beyond.

And make no mistake about it, impaired driving is a real and present danger to California families.

Over 120,000 arrests were made for driving under the influence in 2017 alone. Over a thousand lives are lost on California roads every single year due to impairment.

Thirty-seven percent of road fatalities here involve an impaired driver – more than the national average.

We need to remember these aren't just statistics. These are people.

We know victims suffer long after the crash scene is gone.

Clearly, we need to try new things to get better results.

California has long been a leader in road safety, and it once again has the opportunity to lead on impaired driving, by requiring even first time offenders to use ignition interlocks and lowering the legal threshold to .05%.



There's no magic bullet to eliminate all crashes. But, what we need is a sound approach to law enforcement, education, and enacting common sense laws.

As you've heard from our friends at MADD, ignition interlocks have been really successful in checking repeat offenders.

It makes sense to use all the tools in our toolbox.

By lowering the legal threshold in line with best practices followed the world over, we can actually make a difference and save lives.

I am encouraged by everyone joining us today, organizations that are close partners in the Road to Zero Coalition, working eliminate roadway fatalities.

Up next you'll hear from Peter Kurdock, General Counsel for Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety.

Thank you. Let's continue to do all we can to keep each other safe.