

# Dying to Drink? - The Hard Facts

## Who Gets Hurt?

People like you . . .

- Three out of five Americans will be involved in an alcohol-related car crash.
- Someone is injured in an alcohol-related crash every 32 seconds.

## Who Gets Killed?

People like you . . .

- In 1999 alone, 15,786 people were killed in alcohol-related car accidents. Of those, 2,238 were young people. That's about 42 young people killed in drunk driving accidents every week.
- Almost 40 percent of all traffic fatalities are alcohol related.

## Who Pays?

We all do . . .

- The estimated yearly economic cost of alcohol related car accidents is \$45 billion.

## Why Are Drinking and Driving a Lethal Combination?

- Judgment is the first capacity affected by alcohol. People who've been drinking frequently believe that they're less affected than they are.
- Coordination, vision, and motor skills are drastically impaired by alcohol consumption.
- Being fatigued, stressed, under the weather, or using any medicine can dramatically increase alcohol's effect, making — one harmless little drink — lethally intoxicating to someone behind the wheel.

## How Much Is Too Much?

The only completely safe alcohol consumption level before driving is ZERO.

- If you or anyone else is concerned about your sobriety, don't drive. Get a ride or stay where you are (spend the night if necessary) until you are sure you're able to drive safely.
- Plan ahead. Designate a driver who agrees to "down" only nonalcoholic drinks.

## Watch Out for the Other Guy!

On an average weekend evening, approximately one out of every ten drivers is legally impaired or drunk. Any time of day or night, use seat belts, and be alert to signs of a drunk driver, such as

- unusually wide turns
- weaving, swerving
- hugging the center line, or driving left of center
- excessively fast or slow speeds
- stopping suddenly without apparent cause
- inconsistent turn signals
- driving with headlights off in the dark
- driving with windows rolled down in cold weather.



If a driver ahead of you seems impaired, don't try to pass. Maintain extra distance, and be prepared to stop suddenly. If the driver is behind you, turn right at the next intersection to let him get ahead of you. If the driver is coming toward you, slow down, move to the right, and stop.

## **Beyond the Highway**

Alcohol can be deadly anytime, any place. The dangers of drinking and driving are clear, but some other facts and situations to keep in mind:

- As many as 40 percent of fatal accidents (falls, drownings, etc.) involve alcohol. Alcohol use on or near the water is especially hazardous.
- Alcohol and depression are a deadly duo. One third of all suicides occur while the person is under the influence of alcohol or other drugs.
- About 10,000 people die each year from alcohol related overdoses. Large amounts of alcohol are toxic — as lethal as any other poisonous substance.
- Drinking before or after heavy exercise (a tennis or softball game, volleyball or football scrimmages) can be particularly dangerous. Exertion coupled with alcohol can put a nasty strain on even the best-trained athlete.
- Alcohol consumption plays a role in violence. About 10,000 murders occur each year in situations involving alcohol.
- Anyone who is intoxicated is more vulnerable to crime, from muggings to rape.

## **Don't Get Bombed — Get Involved!**

- Start a campus group to raise awareness about alcohol issues. For example, many colleges have chapters of BACCHUS (Boost Alcohol Consciousness Concerning the Health of University Students). For more information contact BACCHUS of the U.S., Inc., PO Box 10430, Denver, CO 80210, or call 303-871-3068.
- Team up with your highway patrol or AAA to present Safe Driving Seminars.
- Volunteer to assist high school Drivers' Ed. classes to heighten the awareness of teens to the dangers of drinking and driving.
- Kick off a special event, such as homecoming or graduations, with a mammoth line-up of smashed cars from alcohol-related crashes. The cops and the junkyard will be happy to help.
- Start a "Topsy Taxi" program to provide free rides to anyone who needs a safe ride home. Contact campus shuttle service or a local cab company.