



December is National Impaired Driving Prevention Month

Posted on December 1, 2014 by sgagnon

December is National Impaired Driving Prevention Month. We have made great strides in the past couple of decades in sending the message that driving drunk is dangerous and prevents a serious public health risk to all on the road. However, we still have a lot of work to do and need to become more serious and make similar strides with drugged driving. There can be a misconception that driving under the influence of marijuana or a prescription medication is somehow safer than driving while impaired by alcohol. The bottom line is impaired is impaired.

Drunk and drugged driving can result in horrible tragedies and loss of life.

Drunk and Drugged Driving Facts:

- In 2010, 10,228 people were killed in alcohol-impaired driving crashes, accounting for nearly one third of all traffic deaths. 112 million times a year alcohol-impaired drivers put you at risk.
- Of the 1,210 traffic deaths among children ages 0 to 14 years in 2010, 211 (17%) involved an alcohol-impaired driver. (NHTSA, 2012)
- In 2010, over 1.4 million drivers were arrested for driving under the influence of alcohol or narcotics. (DOJ, 2012)
- Drugs other than alcohol (e.g. marijuana and cocaine) are involved in about 18% of motor vehicle driver deaths. These other drugs are often used in combination with alcohol. (Jones, Walsh, 2003)



Drunk and Drugged Driving and Young People

- In 2013, 13.4% of Androscoggin County High School students reported in the past 30 days riding in a vehicle driven by someone who had been consuming alcohol. (Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey, 2013)
- In that same year, 18.4% of Androscoggin County High School students reported in the past 30 days riding in a vehicle driven by someone who had been using illicit drugs like marijuana. (MIYHS, 2013)
- At all levels of blood alcohol concentration (BAC), the risk of being involved in a crash is greater for young people than for older people. (Zador, Krawchuk, & Voas, 2000)
- Among drivers with BAC levels of 0.08% or higher involved in fatal crashes in 2010, more than one out of every 3 were between 21 and 24 years of age (34%). The next two largest groups were ages 25-34 and 35-44. (NHTSA, 2012)



Drugged Driving

Drugs, even those prescribed by a physician, can impair perception, judgment, motor skills, and memory. Recent surveys have shown how pervasive drugged driving has become in the United States.

The Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) is taking steps to highlight the growing problem of drugged driving.

The National Roadside Survey of Alcohol and Drug Use by Drivers, a nationally representative survey by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), found that in 2007, approximately one in eight weekend, nighttime drivers tested positive for illicit drugs. Moreover, approximately one in eight high school seniors responded to the 2010 [Monitoring the Future Study \(MTF\)](#) reported driving after smoking marijuana within two weeks prior to the survey interview. These results highlight the scope of drugged driving in America and reinforce the importance of reducing all drug abuse.

[Drug Involvement of Fatally Injured Drivers](#) (a 2010 NHTSA fact sheet) The Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS), a census of fatal motor vehicle traffic crashes in the United States, contains a number of variables to describe drug involvement for those in fatal crashes. Overall, 3,952 fatally injured drivers tested positive for drug involvement in 2009.

Marijuana-Impaired Driving

Discussions of marijuana legalization in Maine are putting increased focus on marijuana-impaired driving and its impact on public safety. [Project SAM \(Smart Approaches to Marijuana\)](#) summarizes latest science on the effects of marijuana on the brain and body explains how the drug can significantly alter the ability of an individual to drive a vehicle safely. The typical effect is significantly diminished psychomotor performance. Psychomotor skills are essential for the basics of driving; steering, braking, and shifting between gears. These effects can more than double the risk of a vehicle crash. [Click to read more about marijuana-impaired driving.](#)

Make healthy choices...

However, all of this is easily avoided by making smart choices. If you are at a holiday party, think about how much alcohol you consume and have arrangements and back-up plans if you are impaired and unable to drive a vehicle. However, driving is not just impaired by alcohol consumption. Our ability to safely drive a motor vehicle can also be impacted by drug use, including medical marijuana and prescription drugs. When you drive drunk or drugged, you aren't just putting yourself at risk, you are endangering anyone else who is in your vehicle and everyone else on the road.

Other Links and Resources:

[Impaired Driving – Maine Bureau of Highway Safety](#)

[CDC – Impaired Driving: Get the Facts](#)

[Office of National Drug Control Policy – Drugged Driving](#)

[Project SAM \(Smart Approaches to Marijuana\): Marijuana and Driving](#)

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