

Impaired Driving

Though intended to be a festive time, December often brings with it holiday-induced stressors such as facing grief and loss, increased family pressures, and finances stretched thin. Add in a surplus of social activities that commonly include alcohol, and for some during this season, staying sober can be difficult. By the time New Year's Eve has come and gone, authorities see a spike in Operating While Intoxicated (OWI) offenses, binge drinking scares, and other drug- and alcohol-related issues.

Buzzed Driving: The Sobering Statistics

- According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), 885 people lost their lives in traffic crashes involving a drunk driver during the month of December 2017.
- Approximately one-third of all traffic crash fatalities in the United States involve drunk drivers (with blood alcohol concentrations [BACs] of .08 or higher). In 2017, there were 10,874 people killed in drunk-driving crashes. To put it in perspective, that's equal to about 20 jumbo jets crashing, with no survivors.
- Despite the fact that it's illegal to drive when impaired by alcohol, in 2017, one person was killed **every 48 minutes** by a drunk driver on our nation's roads.
- Men are more likely than women to be driving drunk in fatal crashes. In 2017, 21% of males that were involved in fatal crashes were drunk, compared to 14% of females.
- In 2017, motorcycle riders involved in fatal crashes had higher percentages of alcohol impairment than any other type of motor vehicle driver (27% for motorcycle riders, 21% for passenger cars, 20% for light-truck drivers, and 3% for drivers of large trucks).
- Of the traffic fatalities in 2017 among children 14 and younger, 19% occurred in alcohol-impaired-driving crashes.
- On average, an OWI could set you back \$10,000 in attorney's fees, fines, court costs, lost time at work, higher insurance rates, car towing, and more.

It is important to note, however, that alcohol isn't the only substance impairing drivers—drugged driving is on the rise. Use of illicit drugs and/or the misuse of prescription drugs can also make driving a motor vehicle unsafe. According to the 2017 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, nearly 13 million people drove after using illicit drugs.

As the statistics show, drinking and/or using illicit drugs and driving should never be combined. All too often people believe they are "okay to drive" when in fact they are not. Unsure how to determine if you are too impaired to drive? The bottom line is this: *If You Feel Different, You Drive Different*. Avoid making poor decisions at holiday events by planning ahead and ensuring a sober ride home in advance of any alcohol consumption.

Help keep our roadways safe this holiday season. Plan ahead, establish safe transportation, and avoid impaired driving. Remember, driving while impaired not only puts you and your passengers in danger, but also the lives of pedestrians and other drivers and their passengers.

For more information, please visit our website at www.drugfreeadamscounty.org.