Hard Core Drinking Drivers

Get habitual drinking drivers off the nation’s highways

The grim facts:

- One alcohol-impaired driving fatality occurs about every 45 minutes.
- 10,839 people died in the United States from alcohol-impaired driving crashes in 2009.
- In 2009, people identified as “hard core drinking drivers” – those with high blood alcohol concentration (BAC) levels of 0.15 percent or greater or who are repeat offenders with a drunk driving arrest or conviction in the past 10 years – were involved in more than 70 percent of the alcohol-impaired driving fatalities and more than 22 percent of the total highway deaths.
- Between 1982 and 2009, more than 251,000 people died in crashes involving hard core drinking drivers.
- Repeat offenders represent about one-third of all drivers arrested or convicted of driving while intoxicated or under the influence of alcohol.

10,839 Alcohol-Impaired-Driving Fatalities in 2009

- Hard core fatalities: 7,607
- Other alcohol-impaired-driving fatalities

Effective actions to curb hard core drinking drivers:

The elements in the National Transportation Safety Board’s model for an effective anti-drinking and driving program save lives. These elements are:

- Conduct frequent and statewide sobriety checkpoints.
- Implement programs for identifying individuals who drive on a suspended or revoked license.
- Define a repeat offender as anyone arrested of a DWI offense within 10 years of a prior arrest for DWI. One DWI arrest is indicative of a substance abuse problem.
- Impose tougher penalties, assessment and treatment for DWI offenders arrested with a BAC level of 0.15 percent or higher. The estimated relative fatality risk of drivers in single-vehicle crashes with a high BAC is 385 times that of a zero BAC driver.
Use administrative license revocation, which reduces involvement of adult drivers in fatal crashes by 13 percent to 19 percent.

Prohibit plea-bargaining. Alternatively, require that the original alcohol-related charge be listed in court and motor vehicle licensing records.

Prohibit diversion programs. Diverted offenders repeat their offense faster and often receive multiple diversions, despite legislated limits on the use of this measure.

Establish individualized court-based sanction programs, such as DWI courts, with frequent offender contact, unannounced testing, mandatory assessment, treatment, and long-term follow-up.

Use vehicle sanctions, such as license plate impoundment, ignition interlock devices, vehicle immobilization, vehicle impoundment, and vehicle forfeiture.

Implement alternatives to jail confinement such as home detention with electronic monitoring; intensive supervision probation; or jail-treatment facilities, especially for multiple DWI offenders.

Require DWI offenders to maintain a zero BAC level. Such measures have resulted in a 25 percent reduction in the proportion of repeat offenders involved in fatal crashes.

Need more information?

Visit the NTSB website: [www.ntsb.gov](http://www.ntsb.gov)

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