



## Prior DWIs A Factor In Alcohol-Related Fatal Crashes

Drinking drivers involved in fatal crashes are more likely than sober drivers to have a previous conviction for driving while impaired (DWI), according to recently released data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).

Drivers with a measurable blood alcohol concentration (BAC) at the time of the crash were four to eight times more likely to have a prior DWI conviction than drivers who had not been drinking. These findings suggest that increased interventions after the first DWI conviction, such as assessment and treatment for substance use problems and administrative sanctions, may help reduce the number of alcohol-involved fatal crashes

## Early Drinking Linked To Adult Alcohol Dependence

A study of individuals born between 1934 and 1983 found that more Americans began drinking alcohol at an early age over the decades, especially women, and that those who did drink at a younger age were more likely to be alcohol-dependent as adults.

Reuters reported June 9 that researcher Richard A. Grucza of the Washington University School of Medicine and colleagues said that the study doesn't prove that early drinking leads to dependence, "but what [it] does show is that early drinking does not simply reflect a genetic vulnerability to alcohol dependence."

Earlier onset of drinking and increased alcohol dependence in adulthood was true for both men and women, but the changes were more significant in women. Women who were born between 1934 and 1943 began drinking at age 22, on average, while those who were born after 1963 started drinking at an average age of 17. The rate of lifetime alcohol dependence was 9 percent among women born between 1934 and 1943 but rose to 22 percent among those born after 1963.

Grucza noted that while the study found that the decrease in women's average age of first alcohol use and rise in alcohol dependence occurred over the course of a few decades, human "genes don't change in that amount of time."

The study will be published in the August 2008 issue of the journal Alcoholism: Clinical & Experimental Research.

## Public Cost of a Single Drug Addict at \$1.5 Million

A report from accounting firm PricewaterhouseCoopers estimated that each drug addict in the United Kingdom costs taxpayers about \$1.569 million over his or her lifetime, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) reported in June 2008. The estimate included the cost of crime, healthcare under Great Britain's National Health Service, and other considerations.

# Research

## DWI About Us Resource Center, Inc.

The DWI Resource Center is a tax-exempt 501(c)3 New Mexico organization formed to reduce the social and economic impact of DWI through public awareness, education, prevention programs and research. The Center also provides assistance to victims and serves as a central clearinghouse of information on DWI and victims' rights.

- Research and Statistics
- Public Policy & Law
- Victims' Rights Legal Assistance Project
- Court Monitoring
- Drug-Free Workplace Programs
- Retailers For Responsibility
- Victim Impact Panels

For more information about the Center or to make a contribution, please call us at (505) 881-1084, or



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www.dwiresourcecenter.org

## Driving Deaths Peak in Summer, Parents Can Help Deter Poor Decision Making

As teens flow out of high schools across the country and into their cars, some will tragically contribute to this disturbing statistic: car crashes are the leading cause of death for 15- to-20 year-olds in the United States. Add that to the fact that there are more driving-related deaths in the summer months than in any other season of the year, and parents have reason for concern over their children's safety.

According to Liberty Mutual and SADD (Students Against Destructive Decisions) research, teens spend 44 percent more hours driving each week in the summer than during the school year. This same research also offers parents solutions to reduce safety risks as young drivers exercise their summer freedom behind the wheel. According to the

study, parents who set and enforce consequences for teens who break driving laws and family rules can reduce incidents of speeding and cell phone use while driving, and increase seat belt usage and adherence to traffic signals.

In a national study of more than 900 high school students with a driver's license, teens who believe their parents would follow through on threatened consequences for breaking a driving law are significantly less likely to say they speed (43 percent report driving 5 mph or more over the limit) than are the teens who say their parents are unlikely to follow through on any penalty (68 percent).

In addition, teens whose parents enforce penalties for driving law infractions are more likely to wear their seat

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belts (89 percent vs. 74 percent), require their passengers to buckle up (82 percent vs. 64 percent), obey stop signs (91 percent vs. 60 percent), and use turn signals (89 percent vs. 76 percent).

"These findings cannot be overstated," said Greg Gordon, Liberty Mutual vice president, Consumer Marketing, citing research from the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. "Parents can significantly reduce the likelihood of those behaviors by clearly establishing expectations of their teens and then following through on consequences should those expectations be breached."

### Cell Phone Use and Text Messaging

As many states enact or consider legislation to curb cell phone use and text messaging while driving, the SADD/Liberty Mutual research further reveals how parents can influence the effects of these laws. More than half (52 percent) of teens who say their parents are unlikely to follow through on a consequence if they break a driving law report they talk on a cell phone while driving, compared to only 36 percent of teens who believe their parents would indeed penalize them.

In addition, teens who say their parents are likely to enforce a punishment for breaking a family driving rule about cell phones are significantly less likely to talk on the cell phone while driving (37 percent) than are teens who say their parents are unlikely to follow through on any consequence (65 percent).

### Summer Driving Realities

Earlier SADD/Liberty Mutual research (2003) that reveals teens drive 44 percent more hours each week during the summer (23.6 hours) than during the school year (16.4 hours) also spotlights teens' admission to an increase in risky driving behaviors that contribute to crashes.

- 23 percent of teen drivers are more likely to drive with three or more teens in the car in the summer, compared to 6 percent of teen drivers who are more likely to do so during the school year.

- 72 percent of all teens report they stay out later during the summer than the school year. Additionally, 47 percent of teen drivers are more likely to drive late at night during the summer, compared to 6 percent of teen drivers who are more likely to drive late at night during the school year.
- 24 percent of teen drivers are more likely to drive when tired or sleepy during the summer, compared to 9 percent of teen drivers who are more likely to drive fatigued during the school year.

### What Parents Can Do

Liberty Mutual and SADD use seven years of collective driving research to offer these tips to help parents talk to their teens:

- Know New Mexico's Graduated Driver License laws and restrictions, including unsupervised driving, time of day, and passengers in the car, and enforce them.
- Set family rules about driving, outline clear consequences for breaking the rules, and follow through. These rules might include:
  - No friends in the car without an adult
  - No driving after 10 p.m.
  - No use of alcohol or other drugs
  - No distractions while driving, including eating, changing CDs, handling iPods and putting on makeup
  - No cell phone use, including text messaging
- Don't relent. Parents should continue the dialogue with their teens and frequently reinforce the acute dangers of distracted driving, drinking and driving, or using drugs and driving.
- Order a free copy of "The Road Ahead: Stay Safe at the Wheel" by calling 1-800-4-LIBERTY or any local Liberty Mutual office. "The Road Ahead" kit includes a powerful video of teens discussing their driving attitudes and behaviors before and after viewing the HBO Family documentary *Smashed: Toxic Tales of Teens and Alcohol*, a family discussion guide and a family safe-driving pledge.
- Download a copy of Good Family Communication from the auto safety section of [www.libertymutualinsurance.com](http://www.libertymutualinsurance.com).
- Download a copy of SADD's Opening Lifesaving Lines at [www.sadd.org](http://www.sadd.org)

## College Party Characteristics Related to Likelihood of High-Risk Drinking

High-risk drinking among college students is related to the types of parties they attend, according to a recent web survey of undergraduate students attending two large urban universities.

Of students attending one or more parties during the previous extended weekend (Thursday, Friday, and Saturday), 10% reported getting drunk on all three days (a measure of high-risk drinking).

The percentage of students getting drunk on all three days, however, varied depending on several party characteristics.

For example, students who attended a party where alcohol was available were more likely to report getting drunk on all three days than those attending parties where alcohol was not available (10.5% vs. 0.5%). Likewise, students who went to a party where beer was provided in kegs were more likely to report three-day drunkenness (14.5% vs. 6.8%), as were those who attended a party where they did not know the host (13.5% vs. 8.6%).

Other party factors related to being drunk on all three days included the size of the party (larger parties), the location of the party (tailgating, fraternity house, off-campus near the university), and the number of friends the student attended the party with (larger number of friends).

The authors conclude that the identification of these high-risk drinking party characteristics provides "important information needed for the development of both primary and secondary environmental prevention interventions."

For details, including data charts, source information and caveats, download the PDF at: <http://www.cesar.umd.edu/cesar/cesarfax/vol17/17-17.pdf>

### 100 Days & Nights of Summer:

### Slow Down, Buckle Up, Don't Drink & Drive.

During the 100 Days & Nights of Summer campaign, local law enforcement agencies will be conducting checkpoints and saturation patrols, and issuing citations for speeding, seat belt violations and drunk driving.

## 'Courage in a Bottle' Is No Myth

Drunken bravado has biological roots, according to a brain-scan study that finds that alcohol inhibits the ability to feel fear, HealthDay News reported April 30.

"You're less likely to feel afraid, and you're also less likely to run away or to avoid conflict," said study co-author Daniel Hommer of the National Institute on Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse.

Researchers conducted brain scans on a group of 12 social drinkers with an average age of 26 who were given either alcohol or a saline solution intravenously. The subjects were then shown images designed to evoke a fear response while their brain patterns were monitored via functional MRI scans.

The study showed that alcohol increased activity in the reward centers of the brain but depressed activity in areas involved in fear response.

The findings were published in the April 30, 2008 issue of the *Journal of Neuroscience*.

## Drug-Free Work Week, October 20 - 26, 2008

Held annually in October, Drug-Free Work Week is a public awareness campaign intended to highlight the fact that being drug free is key to protecting workplace safety and health and to encourage workers with alcohol and drug problems to seek help.

Drug-Free Work Week is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor and implemented collaboratively with members of its Drug-Free Workplace Alliance and several other organizations, including government agencies, non-profit associations and private companies.

The true spirit of Drug-Free Work Week lies in activities conducted by individual employers and their employees. Ideas range from simple to comprehensive, but all help promote safer, healthier workplaces and represent wise business practices that can be implemented at any time of the year. Although Drug-Free Work Week is a dedicated time each year to place special emphasis on the importance of working drug free, in a safe and healthy workplace, every week is Drug-Free Work Week.