

WORK ON DRIVING SAFELY

A road safety guide for drivers of fleet vehicles



Drink driving

In country areas of NSW, there are more than twice as many fatal drink driving crashes than in metropolitan areas, despite country areas having smaller populations.

How does alcohol affect your driving?

- You don't have to be drunk to be affected by alcohol.
- No one drives as well as usual after drinking alcohol, even though some people may look and act as though they are unaffected.
- Alcohol is a depressant drug that affects most areas of the brain.

Alcohol:

- Slows brain functions so that you can't respond to situations, make decisions or react quickly.
- Reduces your ability to judge how fast you are moving or your distance from other cars, people or objects.
- Gives you false confidence – you may take greater risks because you think your driving is better than it really is.
- Makes it harder to do more than one thing at a time – while you concentrate on steering, you could miss seeing a red light, cars entering from side streets or pedestrians.
- Makes you feel sleepy or fatigued.

You cannot compensate for the effects of alcohol on your brain.

Once alcohol has been consumed, the effects on driving cannot be reversed. Getting your BAC back to zero takes time. No amount of coffee, food, physical activity or sleep will speed up the process. The only thing that will sober you up once you have stopped drinking is time.

As a driver's BAC (Blood Alcohol Concentration) rises, so does the risk of being involved in a crash.

- 0.05 - doubles the risk
- 0.08 – 7 times the risk
- 0.15 – 25 times the risk

Mixing alcohol with drugs

Mixing alcohol with other illegal and some prescription drugs has a multiplying effect and dramatically increases the risk of crashing, even if only small amounts have been taken.

Legislation – blood alcohol limits

NSW has three BAC limits:

- Zero.
- 0.02.
- 0.05.

FACT FILE

72 per cent of all drink drive crashes occur in country NSW.

The limit which applies to you is dependent on the category of your licence and the type of vehicle you are driving. However, even if your legal limit is above zero, it is recommended that you don't drink any alcohol if you plan to drive.

Zero applies to:

- All learner drivers.
- All Provisional 1 drivers.
- All Provisional 2 drivers.
- All visiting drivers holding an overseas or interstate Learner or Provisional Licence (or equivalent).

0.02 applies to:

- Drivers of vehicles of 'gross vehicle mass' greater than 13.9 tonnes.
- Drivers of vehicles carrying dangerous goods.
- Drivers of public vehicles such as taxi or bus drivers.

0.05 applies to:

- All other licences not subject to a 0.02 or zero limit.

Staying under the limit

Estimating your BAC is often inaccurate because:

- The alcohol concentration of drinks vary from 2.5 percent (eg light beer) to over 40 percent (eg vodka, whisky).
- Beer may be served in pints, schooners or middies.
- Wine glasses may vary in size from 100 to 280mls. Many other drinks come in non-standard sizes.
- Factors such as your gender, size, weight, fitness, health and liver function will all affect your BAC. Also, the rate at which alcohol is eliminated from your system varies from person to person.

So, don't try to estimate your BAC. Measure it.

The RTA recommends using an Australian Standards approved (AS – 3547) breath testing device. But remember:

- Alcohol must not be consumed for at least 10 minutes before testing because alcohol in your mouth will give an artificially high reading.
- Your BAC will rise for up to 2 hours after you stop drinking.
- If you go out drinking and have a big night you may still be over the limit the next day so you may need to take another test in the morning.

Penalties

In NSW, Police have power to:

- Stop drivers at random to test for alcohol.
- Arrest drivers who test over the legal limit.

If you test over the limit at the roadside you will be arrested, taken to a Police station for evidentiary breath analysis, charged by Police, finger printed, photographed and you will have to appear in court. Middle and high range offenders will have their licence suspended by Police at the Police Station when they are charged.

Getting home safely

If you plan to drink, plan NOT to drive. Plan ahead and arrange overnight accommodation or alternative transport.

- Share a taxi with friends
- Catch public transport
- Ride with a driver who hasn't been drinking or taking drugs
- Arrange for a friend, colleague or relative to pick you up.

Source: Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) website 2009



Remember, if you go out drinking and have a big night you may still be over the limit the next day so you may need to take another test in the morning.