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How have levels of drink –drive been reduced effectively?

Two papers this Autumn have suggested that a reduction of BAC levels from 0.08 to 0.05 is an effective way of reducing alcohol related traffic accidents and fatalities. The research by James C Fell et al published in the Journal of Safety Research calls for a reduction in the US and the UK Advisory Council for the Misuse of Drugs report calls for a reduction to .05 for drivers under 25 in the UK.

It is important to put BAC levels in context with a complexity of measures that effect alcohol related fatalities. 10 different BAC limits are in force in 41 countries according to the Worldwide Brewing Alliance report on drinking and driving, but the crux is succinctly summarised by Enrico Grillo Pasquarelli, Director of Inland Transport at the European Commission in Brussels, 'respecting existing national legislation alone would help save

about 5,000 lives per year in Europe'.

The European Road Safety Charter, launched in 2004 aims to halve the number of road fatalities in Europe to 25,000 by 2010 from 50,000 in 2001. Reducing fatalities where alcohol is implicated forms an important part of this strategy to which many associations and companies have signed up (Brewers of Europe and IREB for example).

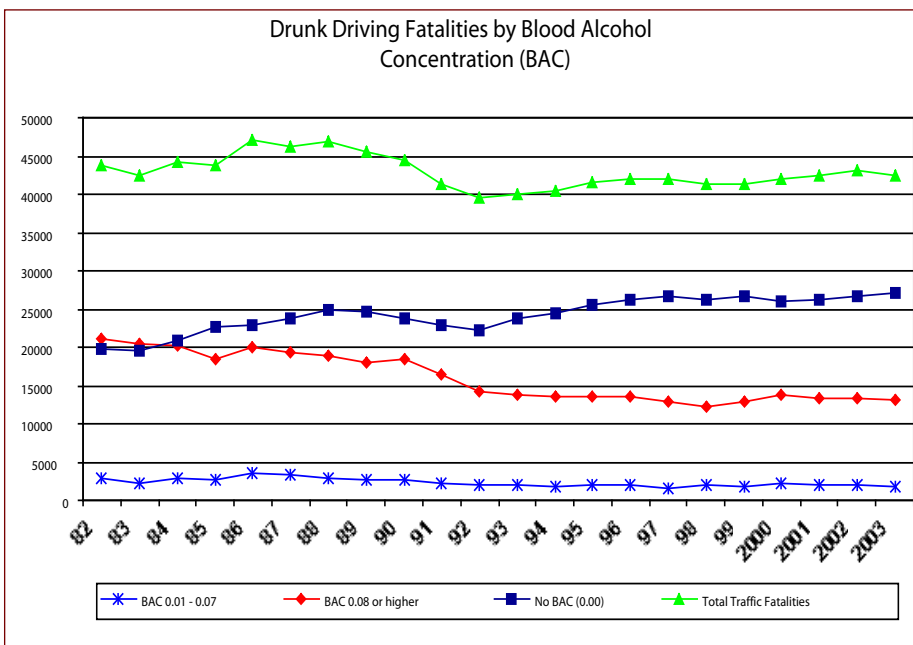
It is important to recognise that the overall trend internationally for alcohol related accidents, casualties and fatalities is downwards. Countries such as the US and UK show a reduction in the rate of decline, but this follows a dramatic long term decline since the 1980's. The decrease in alcohol related accidents is due to many factors, including increased public awareness and responsibility, safer vehicles, seatbelt and motorbike

helmet use, random breath testing and better law enforcement. Causes of accidents are also better recognised and include excessive speed, tiredness, mobile phone and drug use as well as alcohol.

Solutions that could reduce drink drive further

Targeting repeat offenders or 'recidivists'

80% of the alcohol related injuries in the Netherlands are estimated to be caused by a hard core (above 1.3g/L) of repeat drink drive offenders. Measures to deter recidivists increasingly include the use of interlocks or vehicle immobilisers which offer the potential to change behaviour in the hard core who are responsible for the majority of alcohol related accidents. Programmes that create a scale of graduated penalties and licence withdrawal for repeat offenders also help.



Lowest rate of road fatalities, in rank order, with corresponding BAC limits

Rank	Country	Killed per 1 billion vehicle-kilometres, all roads	BAC limit (grams/dL)
1	UK	7.5 (1998)	0.08
2	Norway	8.3 (2001)	0.02
	Sweden	8.3 (1999)	0.02
3	Switzerland	8. (2002)	0.08
4	Finland	8.5 (2002)	0.05
	Netherlands	8.5 (2000)	0.05
5	Canada	9.0 (2001)	0.08
	Australia	9.0 (2002)	0.05

Highest rate of road fatalities, in rank order, with corresponding BAC limits

20	Republic of Korea	22.8 (200)	0.05
21	Greece	26. (1998)	0.05
22	Czech Republic	33.1(2002)	0.00
23	Slovak republic	46.9 (2000)	0.00
24	Turkey	73.0 (2001)	0.05

Source: Economic factors in identifying best practice for reducing road traffic crashes by drinking drivers Authors F.B.Huessy and M.W.N Perrine

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Research from the Worldwide Brewing Alliance on drinking and driving 2005 has found that there is a very low risk of being caught drink driving in most jurisdictions. High profile random breath testing coupled with hard hitting public campaigns offer a powerful deterrent to potential drink drivers.

The enforcement of existing laws combined with information to the public on what the laws are and what the punishments entail are also powerful deterrents to young male drivers - 89% of those found driving over the limit in the UK were male in 2003.

The industry is funding many 'carrot' campaigns to complement the 'stick of the law', with the implementation of imaginative designated driver campaigns and toll free taxis or free bus services. Designated driver campaigns and incentives offer valuable contributions and rewards for non drinking drivers as well as helping publicise the risk of drinking and driving.

So, to conclude, every effort must be made to support the authorities in enforcing laws regarding drivers over the existing legal blood alcohol concentration limit. Specific measures should be targeted at those who drink and drive persistently, or at a level well over the legal limit. These programmes should include random breath testing and public education campaigns aimed at 'vulnerable' young men.

Reference: The Worldwide Brewing Alliance - Drink Drive Report 2005 can be accessed at www.beerandpub.com/content.asp?id_Content=2555 or www.brewersofeurope.org/asp/publications/publications.asp

Fell, J and Voas, R, The effectiveness of reducing illegal blood alcohol concentration (BAC) limits for driving: Evidence for lowering the limit to .05 BAC *Journal of Safety Research* 37, (2006) p233-243.



Daar kun je mee THUIS komen

ABS, 8 AIRBAGS...
MAIS PAS DE BOB.

Bob au volant. Toujours.

Alcohol related traffic injury statistics

Austria - alcohol related fatalities as a percentage of all crash fatalities were static 2001 and 2003 at 6.5%

Belgium - 8.4% of drivers over the legal limit in 2000 with alcohol implicated in 10% of fatal or serious injuries

UK - 16% road deaths were alcohol related (560 deaths in 2003) representing 1 person killed per 1.2 billion vehicle km. However, the percentage of those failing random breath tests or compulsory testing after any accident has risen from a low of 12% in 1999 to 18% in 2002. 11% of those convicted for drink drive in 2000 were female. The Department of Transport estimates that a potential 30 lives would be saved per annum if BAC levels were reduced to .05g/l

Czech Republic - decrease from 193 alcohol related road deaths in 1995 to 59 in 2004

Estonia - drop from 68 alcohol related road fatalities in 2002 to 26 in 2004

Finland - consistent 13% of traffic accidents are alcohol related

France - the number of alcohol related road fatalities in 2004 was down 13.5% from 2003 figures.

Italy - alcohol related traffic accidents represent 1.2% of total road accidents and 4.5% of deaths.

Netherlands - 3.4% of drivers tested in 2004 were over the limit - the lowest level since 1975

New Zealand - drop of 40% in alcohol related road deaths since 1990 to 148 in spite of 33% more vehicles and 19% increase in population.

US - drop of 36% in alcohol related road fatalities since 1982 when 26,173 persons were killed in alcohol related crashes. In 2004, 36% of passenger fatalities were not wearing seat belts.

Austria and Switzerland have lowered their BAC to .05g/l - Austria short term decline linked in with hard hitting police presence and advertising. Switzerland, police report decline in drink drive is largely due to higher fines.

Exceptions to the declining trend

Poland - alcohol related road crashes and fatalities are increasing

Sweden - 28% of fatalities have alcohol or other drugs in the blood - up from 18% in 2002

South Africa - 46% of all road deaths were above the new limit of .05 in 2003