ROAD TO ZERO

ALCOHOL AND DRUGS

What are the risks?

TAC Survey Research[4] shows that the vast of majority of Victorians understand that drink driving is dangerous and think that it is unacceptable. Only 4% of drivers report drink driving in the last 12 months.

The vast majority of drivers tested by Police do not exceed the legal blood alcohol levels. In the last five years, however, close to one in five drivers and riders who lost their lives had a BAC (Blood Alcohol Concentration) greater than 0.05[1].

Medicines and illegal drugs can also impair driving ability. Combining alcohol with any drugs is especially risky[2]. In fact, those who have taken medicines or illegal drugs when drinking alcohol face twice the crash risk of those who have consumed only alcohol[3]. Drugs and/or alcohol are present in 39% of driver and motorcyclist deaths in Victoria.

Victoria was the first jurisdiction in the world to introduce saliva testing to detect illegal drugs. Now, as well as testing drivers for alcohol, Victoria Police can test drivers for the presence of drugs by taking a saliva sample with a swab.

Drinking alcohol is also associated with a higher crash risk for pedestrians.[5] Data shows that approximately 30% of pedestrians killed on the road were found to have a BAC of 0.05 or more.

Separating drinking and driving altogether is the safest option, as even lower levels of blood alcohol can impair driving.

The effects of alcohol on driving performance have been researched[6] extensively, with some of the findings up to 0.06 BAC shown in the table on the right.

BAC level	Effects on performance
0.01	Drowsiness Difficulty doing two things at once, e.g. keeping lane position while searching the periphery Reaction time can be impaired
0.02	Hazard perception can be impaired
0.03	Impairment in maintaining consistent attention Slowing of information processing speed Maintaining balance is harder
0.04	Impaired ability to locate and focus on objects in the environment Slower eye movements Maintaining following distance impaired Time estimation is poorer
0.05	Reduced coordination and ability to track moving objects Estimation of speed is impaired Depth perception (judgment of distance) is impaired Speeding is more likely and maintaining consistent speed is impaired Inconsistent lane positioning
0.06	Braking and steering Departing the road

What works?

- Separating drinking and driving is the safest option. Probationary licence holders have a zero BAC limit, and research shows that this has been effective in reducing drink driving amongst young drivers[7].
- Planning ahead on how to get home, before having the first drink.
- Large scale random breath testing by Victoria Police coupled with TAC advertising has changed the culture of drinking and driving[8], providing an effective deterrent with an ultimate reduction in crashes[9].
- Alcohol interlocks detect the BAC of the driver and prevent the car from starting when required. Victorian research showed a 79% reduction in drink driving among repeat offenders when re-licensed with an alcohol interlock fitted[10].
- Reading the labels of medicines and discussing the effect that medicines can have on driving with a health professional. When taking medicines refraining from drinking any alcohol if driving.

The law

If you are a fully licensed driver who gets caught driving with a BAC of .05 or more, you'll:

- Pay a fine
- Lose your licence for a minimum of 3 months
- Need to complete a compulsory drink driver behaviour change program
- Have an alcohol interlock installed in any vehicle you drive (once re-licensed) for at least six months.

If you get caught with drugs in your system, you'll lose your licence for a minimum of six months and will also need to complete a drug driver program before getting your licence back.

[1] Towards Zero Strategy and Action Plan: https://www.towardszero.vic.gov.au/safe-people/focus-areas/drink-driving

[2] Hels, T., Bernhoft, I.M., Lyckegaard, A., Houwing, S., et al. (2011). *Risk of injury by driving with alcohol and other drugs*. Deliverable 2.3.5. of DRUID Driving under the Influence of Drugs, Alcohol and Medicines. European Commission, Brussels.

[3] SWOV (2016). *Driving under the influence of alcohol.* SWOV Fact sheet, September 2016, The Hague.

[4] http://www.tac.vic.gov.au/road-safety/statistics/about-tac-surveys/road-safety-and-marketing-surveys

[5] Phillips D.P., Brewer K.M. (2011). The relationship between serious injury and blood alcohol concentration (BAC) in fatal motor vehicle accidents: BAC=0.01% is associated with significantly more dangerous accidents than BAC=0.00%. *Addiction*, 106, 1614–1622.

[6] https://one.nhtsa.gov/people/injury/research/pub/hs809028/DocPage.htm

[7] Imberger, K., Healy, D., Catchpole, J., Mitsopoulos-Rubens, E. & McIntyre, A. (2017). Examination of the Victorian Graduated Licensing System's Effect on Young Novice Driver Safety. *Proceedings of the Australasian Road Safety Conference, October 10-12*, Perth, Australia.

[8] McIntyre, A., Cockfield, S., & Nieuwesteeg, M. (2011). Drink and drug driving in Victoria: Lessons from 10 years of TAC research. *Proceedings of the 2011 Australasian College of Road Safety Conference, 6-9 November*, Melbourne, Australia.

[9] Cameron, M., Haworth, N., Oxley, J., Newstead, S. & Le, T. (1993). *Evaluation of Transport Accident Commission Road Safety Television Advertising*. Report No. 52. Monash University Accident Research Centre.

[10] Watson, A., Imberger, K., Cavallo, A., Healy, D., Freeman, J., Filtness, A., Wilson, H. & Catchpole J. (2015). The impact of safety measures on the re-offence and crash rates of drink-driving offenders in Victoria. *Proceedings of the 2015 Australasian Road Safety Conference 14 – 16 October*, Gold Coast, Australia.