



## 5 Things That Impair Your Safe Driving Ability

When we hear "impaired driver," we usually think of individuals who chose to get behind the wheel after drinking alcohol. But did you know that drinking and driving is only one way that a person can reduce their ability to safely steer a vehicle? Several other things can reduce someone's mental and physical skills to the point where they are a danger to themselves and others on the road.



### 1. Alcohol

The most widely recognized cause of impaired driving is drinking and driving.

Alcohol reduces functions of the brain that are essential to operate a vehicle. This substance impairs thinking, reasoning and muscle

coordination, making driving dangerous for the driver and others on the road.

About 37 people die in the US from drunk impaired driving daily; that is 1 person every 39 minutes.

In 2021, there were 13,384 fatalities due to alcohol-impaired driving, which is an increase of 14% compared to 2020. All these deaths were preventable.

When planning to attend a concert, sports event, or any other function at which alcoholic beverages will be served, to plan for a sober ride to and from the venue.

While having a beverage sponsor can highly impact your event's budget, employers should ensure attendees have a designated driver to not only save their employees from risking a DUI, but also risking their lives on the road.

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### 2. Drugs

Like alcohol, marijuana and other drugs can slow coordination, judgment, and reaction time, all of which are essential for driving safely.

Drugs such as cocaine and methamphetamine can make drivers more aggressive and reckless.

Some prescription and over-the-counter medications can also cause impaired driving behavior as their consumption can cause extreme dizziness, drowsiness, and other negative side effects.

Using two or more drugs at the same time (including alcohol) is especially dangerous as it will intensify the impairing effects of each drug.

According to trauma centers, from October to Dec. 2020, 56% of drivers involved in severe injury and fatal crashes tested positive for at least one drug.

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### **3. Lack of Sleep**

Drowsy driving crashes often occur between midnight and 6 am and in the late afternoon.

They frequently happen on highways and rural roads and involve a single driver running off the road at a high speed with no evidence of braking.

Another alarming fact is that being awake for at least 18 hours is the same as someone having a blood content (BAC) of 0.05%.

Whether fatigue is caused by a new baby waking every couple of hours, a long shift at work, or time spent in front of a video game screen, the negative outcomes are the same. These include a reduced ability to recognize and process hazards on the road, workplace accidents, and serious health consequences.

While naps and caffeine can provide a temporary boost, getting 7-8 hours of sleep each day is the only way to protect yourself against the risks of driving when you're drowsy.

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### **4. Distractions**

If a driver is not fully focused because they are engaged in other activities, they are driving distracted.

While we often think of distracted driving as texting or talking on the phone, it can take many other forms: changing the radio station, applying makeup, eating, talking with passengers, or taking a sip of your drink. Each of these activities distract you by taking your hands off of the steering wheel, your eyes off of the road, and your mind off of driving safely.

Making sure your business has a policy about using phones, earbuds, and other distracting devices while driving can help employees form good driving habits that reduce the risk of them damaging company property being injured or killed in a crash.

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### **5. Medical Conditions**

There are several common medical conditions that impair your driving.

Cataracts: when the lens of the eyes become opaque, causing blurred vision. It may affect one or both eyes. Safe driving requires clear vision, so have your eyes examined regularly.

Dementia: a condition that affects thinking, memory, and social skills. It is mostly caused by Alzheimer's disease, but it can also be a result of brain injury, stroke, and other diseases. Dementia can make driving unsafe as it impairs essential driving skills such as judgement, memory, and decision-making.

Macular degeneration: the progressive worsening and loss of vision as we get older. It is one of the main causes of vision loss and can make seeing pedestrians, objects in the road and road signs difficult. As the condition continues to worsen, a person may need to use other means of transportation.

Epilepsy: a neurological disorder that causes recurring seizures. The causes may be genetic or due to a brain injury or stroke. Since seizures cause a temporary loss of awareness, driving with uncontrolled epilepsy endangers the driver and other people on the road. Drivers with epilepsy may have driving restrictions unless they can prove that the condition is controlled and that they have been seizure-free for a required period.

If there is a concern about driving with medical conditions that impact driving, whether for oneself or a loved one, it may be time to visit a doctor to evaluate the problem.

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***To keep everyone safe, do not drive while impaired.***

***Let someone else drive you or take public transportation if you are impaired.***

***If you need to use your phone while driving, need, pull over, and take care of any distracting activities before or after your trip, not while you are driving.***

## **Labor Day Warning: Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over**

Summer may be coming to an end, but there's no end in sight to law enforcement's crackdown on impaired driving. This Labor Day holiday, the Kansas Department of Transportation urges drivers to think twice before driving drunk or high.

Enforcement for the national impaired driving campaign, "If You Feel Different, You Drive Different. Drive High, Get a DUI," will run for 20 days - from Aug. 17, through Sept. 5. KDOT is working to reduce sobering statistics involving driving drunk or high. During August and September of 2021 in Kansas, there were 19 total fatal crashes of impaired driving, according to KDOT stats.

"It doesn't matter what term you use," said Gary Herman, KDOT Behavioral Safety Manager. "If you feel different, you drive different - an impaired person should never get behind the wheel."

KDOT is spreading the word about the Labor Day increase in impaired driving crashes and fatalities. A news conference will take place at the Kansas Turnpike Authority office in Topeka at 10 a.m. on Aug. 16 to kick off the safety campaign and upcoming law enforcement mobilization.

Nationally, about 37 people die in drunk-driving crashes each day – that’s one person every 39 minutes, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. In 2021, 13,384 people died in alcohol-impaired driving traffic deaths – a 14% increase from 2020.

“The bottom line is that no matter what the substance is, if you are impaired, you should not be driving,” Herman said. “The consequences are real and cannot be undone. Play it safe.”

Like drunk driving, drug-impaired driving is illegal nationwide. NHTSA states that drugs can impair a driver’s coordination, judgment and reaction times; make drivers more aggressive and reckless; and cause extreme drowsiness, dizziness and other side effects.

If convicted for impaired driving, drivers face stiff penalties, hefty financial consequences and time in jail. Bottom line - don’t drive impaired. Designate a sober driver, take public transportation or stay home.

## Traffic Safety Minute Resources for Staff Meetings

### Stop On Red Week 2023

Stop on Red Week 2023 National Stop on Red Week, August 6-12, serves as an important reminder of the dangers we face on our roads and the responsibility we all hold to Stop on Red. Between 2008 and 2021, an estimated 11,296 people were killed in crashes related to red-light running.

[Read More](#)

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## Hosting a Health and Safety Fair? We'd love to be involved!

The Kansas Traffic Safety Resource Office offers you **FREE** traffic safety brochures, posters, flyers, and giveaway items.

**PLUS**, our website gives you information on traffic safety topics like teen drivers, distracted driving, drunk driving, motorcycle safety, and more!



We can bring **FREE** safe driving programs directly to your community organization or workplace.

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## Driver Safety Programs

Drivers Education Schools in Kansas

### Employer-Based Driver Safety Programs

The TRB Behavioral Traffic Safety Cooperative Research Program's BTSCR WebResource 1: Employer-Based Driver Safety Programs is based on an assessment of what elements in employer-based traffic safety programs and other behavior change programs are likely to change driver behavior and workplace safety culture.

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### Online Defensive Driving Courses - National Safety Council

NSC Defensive Driving Online Courses deliver the most relevant, leading-edge content to motivate and educate employees to be safe, responsible drivers. You can trust NSC to best train drivers to avoid collisions, crashes, injuries or worse.

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