

Over the Influence ■

In spite of the best efforts of a lot of people, impaired drivers like Jeff continue driving up the body count on our streets and highways.

It's more than disturbing—it's a disaster, aimed at each of us, just waiting to happen.

Because the final, frustrating fact about drinking, drugs, and driving is this: It's one problem that is *totally* preventable.

Still, preventing the potential disasters that every impaired driver represents is going to require a lot more than sobriety checkpoints and public service ads.



Because the **real** solution starts in the spot where each of us is standing (or sitting) right now—with a commitment **not** to drive if we're impaired—and not to let our friends or family members drive when they're impaired, either.

Because even though the decision to modify, mangle, or medicate your moods with booze or other chemicals may be *your* business, taking it to the streets is *everybody's* business.

Keep it your business. ■



This is one in a series of publications on drugs, behavior, and health published by Do It Now Foundation. Please call or write for a list of current titles, or visit our web site at www.doitnow.org.



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D.U.I.

DRINKING ■ DRUGS & DRIVING

A D.I.N. PUBLICATION BY GAYLE ROSELLINI

Facing Facts ■

The facts are already in. They've been in so long, in fact, that a lot of us don't pay much attention to them anymore.

But they're *still* real and they still have *massive* impact when you consider that they affect the lives of real people:

■ **Fact:** Alcohol figures into 32 percent of all traffic fatalities. In 2009, 10,839 Americans were killed in drinking-related accidents.

■ **Fact:** Nobody knows how many deaths that drug use adds to the total, only that it does. In a

Prime time. Drivers 24 and under have been linked to nearly a third of all DUI fatalities.



study at the University of Maryland, a third of accident victims had smoked pot prior to a crash.

■ **Fact:** Three of every five of us will be involved in an alcohol-related accident in our lifetimes.

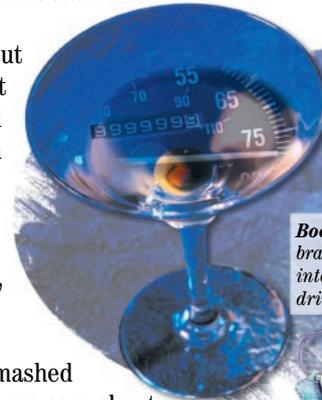
Don't like the facts—or the odds?

Changing them means changing more than our attitudes about driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs (DUI). It means changing our actions, and helping to change the actions of others.

That's why federal law required all states to adopt, by 2004, a uniform standard setting legal impairment at blood-alcohol content (BAC) levels of 0.08 percent, from the previous standard of 0.1 percent.

And that's also why we put together this pamphlet: to put things on a more personal level—like, say, *your* person and *your* level.

Because there's one more fact that many of us forget about drinking, drugs, and driving that we need to face: The next life that gets mangled by a driver who's smashed could be ours — or someone we care about.



Booze has a short fuse. Alcohol dulls brain skills (and turns a set of car keys into a potential weapon) long before a drinker feels drunk—or dangerous.

Alcohol figures into 32% of all U.S. traffic fatalities — 10,839 deaths in 2009 alone. Nobody knows how many more deaths drug use adds to the total — only that it **does**.



A Night in the Life ■

Jeff is a social drinker. He likes beer better than the hard stuff, doesn't drink every day, doesn't "crave" alcohol, and never gets falling-down drunk.

He especially likes going out for drinks and a few games of pool on Saturday night. He's driven home from the bar a thousand times without any trouble. Until tonight.

■ **Fact:** A 12-ounce beer, a glass of wine, and a shot of liquor all contain about the same amount of alcohol. Half of all DUI arrests involve beer alone.

Jeff started drinking and shooting pool around 8 p.m., and closed out the bar at 1:00 a.m. About half a mile from his house, he was pulled over by an officer who noticed his car weaving. Jeff thought his driving was perfectly fine.

■ **Fact:** Alcohol affects higher-order brain skills (and turns a set of car keys into a potential weapon) long before a drinker "feels" drunk—or dangerous. As little as two drinks per hour can reduce alertness and slow decision-making skills.

When the officer asked Jeff if he'd been drinking, Jeff admitted that he'd had "a few," even though he'd been in the bar for five hours and had dropped more than \$40.

■ **Fact:** Drinkers consistently underestimate how much they've had to drink and how intoxicated—and impaired—they actually are.

The officer ordered Jeff out of his car for a field sobriety test.

He flashed a light in Jeff's eyes, checked the color of his skin, and asked him to perform a few simple tasks, such as touching his nose with his eyes closed, standing on one foot, walking heel to toe, and reciting the alphabet. When Jeff failed the test, he protested, "I couldn't do that stuff even if I wasn't drinking."

■ **Fact:** Almost all healthy, sober adults are able to complete these tasks without difficulty. Inability to pass these tests is a reliable indicator of driving impairment.

The officer told Jeff he was under arrest for driving under the influence of intoxicants. He was frisked, handcuffed, and taken to the police station. His car was impounded.

At the station, Jeff was asked to take a breathalyzer test to determine if he was over the

It's 12:30 a.m. Do you know where your designated driver is?

Probably the best way to avoid problems is to go the "designated driver" route during a night out. You **know** the drill: One member of a group volunteers to not drink and do all the driving.

There's only **one** tricky part: You have to pick the driver *before* you paint the town. That way there's no question about who's drinking club soda—and who's driving home.

Other tips for a safe trip:

▶ **Drink responsibly.** Space your drinks and wait at least an hour after your last one before driving.

▶ **Know your limit.** By the time you start to feel drunk, you already *are*. Stop before you get there.

▶ **Don't mix alcohol and drugs.** Even an antihistamine or a cold pill can be a problem when combined with a few drinks.

If you're alone and you're determined to get bombed, at least make sure you have a parachute: cab fare. Or ask a (sober) friend for a ride. It's trite, but it's true: Friends *don't* let friends drive drunk—or otherwise wasted. ■



legal DUI limit (.10 percent blood alcohol in most states; .08 percent in other states and Canada).

■ **Fact:** The amount of alcohol in a drinker's body can be accurately measured with a breath test. Breath tests *do* work.

Jeff was told that he had the right to refuse the breath test, but if he did, his driver's license would be automatically suspended for three months. Jeff was willing to take the test because he thought it would prove that he wasn't drunk.

■ **Fact:** Most drivers don't think they're drunk until they're beyond legal levels of intoxication, levels that seriously impair driving ability.

Jeff's blood alcohol concentration (BAC) was .15 percent—almost double the legal limit in his state. But he still didn't consider himself too drunk to drive.

■ **Fact:** Driving skills begin to suffer at BAC levels below .10 percent. In the year 2000, 3,523 people died in accidents involving drivers with BAC levels lower than .10 percent.

Jeff was booked, fingerprinted, photographed, and strip-searched. Then he was allowed a phone call, and was locked up.

Three hours later, he was released when his wife paid the \$500 bail.

It cost another \$125 to get his car back from the impound lot.

He had to take a day off work to meet with his lawyer. He'd planned on pleading not guilty. The lawyer told Jeff that they didn't have much chance of winning, but that he'd take the case to trial if Jeff would pay his \$1500 retainer—in advance. Jeff decided to plead guilty.

He had to take another day off work to go to court.

There, the judge fined him \$500, ordered Jeff to attend a special DUI traffic school, and sentenced him to 24 hours in jail (suspended, if Jeff performed 20 hours of community service work). His driver's license was revoked for six months.



Moments of truth. DUI stops result in about 1.4 million arrests each year.

Driving when **you're** loaded is like firing a gun on a busy street. You don't have to hit someone to be a hazard to **everybody**.



■ **Fact:** In recent years, every state has toughened its penalties for DUI offenses. Most automatically suspend the license of first-time offenders, and many impose fines *and* jail sentences.

Second time offenders can lose their license for up to a year and spend 10 or more days in jail.

Before his arrest, Jeff never thought of himself as anything but a social drinker. And he never considered himself a danger on the road.

His arrest made him mad. His trial was expensive and humiliating.

And he still wasn't convinced he'd been too drunk to drive.

He cooled his heels at home for a few weeks, but within a month he was back to his old tricks, drinking and dancing and shooting pool on weekend nights—and driving home.



■ **Fact:** Continuing to drink and drive after a DUI arrest is a sign of a potentially serious drinking problem.

Experts say that three-fourths of people arrested two or more times for DUI are alcoholics.

A year later, Jeff was arrested again. This time he lost his license for a year, was placed on probation, and fined \$1,000.

He was lucky. He hadn't had an accident and he hadn't created major problems for anyone but himself and his family.

Hopefully, this time Jeff will learn that driving when *he's* loaded is like firing a loaded gun in the middle of a busy street.

You don't have to hit someone to be a hazard to everybody.

When Do You Say When?



Blood-Alcohol Concentration (mg/100 ml)

▶ Numbers highlighted in red reflect legal impairment at 0.08 percent.

Weight in lbs.	1 Drink				2 Drinks				3 Drinks				4 Drinks			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
100	.043	.028	.013	—	.087	.072	.057	.042	.130	.115	.100	.085	.174	.159	.144	.129
125	.034	.019	.004	—	.069	.054	.039	.024	.103	.088	.073	.058	.139	.124	.109	.094
150	.029	.014	—	—	.058	.043	.028	.013	.087	.072	.057	.042	.116	.101	.086	.071
175	.025	.010	—	—	.050	.035	.020	.005	.075	.060	.045	.030	.100	.085	.070	.055
200	.022	.007	—	—	.043	.028	.013	—	.065	.050	.035	.020	.087	.072	.057	.042
225	.019	.004	—	—	.039	.024	.009	—	.058	.043	.028	.013	.078	.063	.048	.033
250	.017	.002	—	—	.035	.020	.005	—	.052	.037	.022	.007	.070	.055	.040	.025

Booze & Behavior. You may think you can "hold" your liquor better than others, but the rate that alcohol is absorbed and eliminated from the body is fixed, and largely determined by body size, amount consumed, and time of last use.