

Lowering Blood-Alcohol Levels...

All 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico now make it a crime to drive with a blood-alcohol concentration (BAC) of .08 percent or more. Research from around the world has made a case for lowering the limit even more.

James Fell and Robert Voas from the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation, a nonprofit group in Calverton, MD conducted the review. They reported that when the United States lowered the legal BAC limit from .10 to the current .08, alcohol-related crashes and injuries dropped by an average of 7 to 8 percent. In countries where the limit was lowered to .05 BAC, additional reduction was seen.

BAC refers to a measurable amount of alcohol in human blood. This amount is measured in grams per deciliter (g/dl).

A positive BAC, which is .01 g/dl or higher, means that alcohol has been consumed.

Fell said, "There is clear, strong evidence that lowering the BAC limit is effective." He has studied impaired driving for 30 years. "Whether it's lowered from .10 to .08 or from .08 to .05, the number of deaths and injuries from drunk driving will be reduced and lives will be saved."

The review makes several points to support BAC limits lower than .08 percent:

- * In laboratory experiments, most people are significantly impaired at a BAC of .05. This level of intoxication reduces coordination and response to emergency driving situations. It also induces drowsiness and interferes with the ability to steer and track moving objects.

- * Compared to drivers who haven't been drinking, drivers with a BAC of .05 to .07 are four to 10 times more likely to be involved in a fatal crash.

- * All states already prohibit truck drivers from having more than a .04 BAC.

- * There is public-support for lower BAC limits.

According to surveys, a majority of Americans believe that no one should driver after having two or three drinks. For most people, that's equivalent to a BAC of about .05.

- * There is professional support for lower limits.

Organizations that favor BAC limits of .05 or less include the World Medical Association, the American and British Medical Associations, the European Commission, the European Transport Safety Council, the World Health Organization, and the American College of Emergency Physicians.

- * The movement toward lower BAC limits has strong international support. Nations with a .05 limit include Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Israel, Italy, the

Address Substance Abuse Recovery on the Job

Alcohol and drug problems are a major health concern that affects millions of people, a vast majority of whom are employed.

It is reported that 77.6 percent of adults with substance use disorders were employed in 2004.

Alcohol and drug abuse was found to be the most common problem for employees, accounting for 20 percent of voluntary employee assistance referrals to treatment and 50 percent of supervisory referrals.

Employers play a critical role in steering people toward recovery.

By committing to a supportive alcohol-and -drug-free workplace, employers can benefit their employees and their businesses significantly.

Steps that can be taken by employers include providing a clear company policy; supervisory training; employee educational programs; and access to treatment and healthcare coverage that includes treatment for substance abuse.

A Clear Company Policy. A company policy that spells out the rights and responsibilities of employees and supervisors regarding alcohol and drug abuse and its effects in the workplace is key to creating an alcohol-and-drug-free work environment that supports treatment and the return to work of individuals in recovery

Red Flags in the Workplace: Difficulty meeting deadlines, alternating periods of high and low efficiency, unrealistic excuses for lowered work quality, increased absenteeism and conflict with co-workers are some of the performance indicators of alcohol and drug abuse and its effects in the workplace.

Training supervisors Recognizing these "red flags" and offering guidance e for interventions and referrals to treatment can benefit both the employer and the employee. Many companies with more than 100 workers offer employee assistance programs (EAPs). These programs provide confidential problem identification, short-term counseling, referrals to treatment and follow-up services.

Access to Treatment and Health Care Coverage. Providing treatment to employees may not have to disrupt their job schedules or performance. A range of services are available on an outpatient basis that allow workers to stay on the job while seeking treatment.

Source: [Boston Herald, Patrice Muchowski, December 1, 2006 \(paraphrased\)](#)

Netherlands, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, and Turkey. Norway and Sweden have a .02 BAC limit.

"There is a worldwide trend to totally separate drinking and driving," says Steve Simon, a clinical professor at the University of Minnesota Law School and director of the DWI Task Force for the Minnesota Criminal Justice System. "The Research shows that any amount of alcohol in a driver's system increases the risk of being involved in a crash."

Simon believes that the effort to lower the BAC to .05 in the United States will be a long and slow process that could take as long as 10 to 20 years. Even at this, he feels the movement will eventually succeed.

Impaired driving affects one in three Americans during their lifetime. In 2004, 16,694 people died in alcohol-related motor vehicle crashes, which is 39 percent of all traffic-related deaths in the United States.

Source: [Join Together Article by Doug Toft, November 22, 2006.\(paraphrased\)](#)