



Aggressive Strategies Needed to Reduce Crashes Involving Alcohol

The Problem

Alcohol-impaired driving is one of the nation's deadliest crimes, claiming 16,885 lives in 2005. That's 46 people a day on average. And alcohol is implicated in nearly 4 of every 10 motor vehicle crash fatalities. Following marked declines in alcohol-related crashes from the mid-1980s to the early 1990s, the curve has flattened. Annual fatalities have ranged between 16,500 and 18,000 a year since 1994.

The societal cost of alcohol-related crashes exceeds \$50 billion yearly—more than \$136 million each day. In 2005, of drivers and motorcycle operators involved in fatal crashes, 77 percent had a blood alcohol content (BAC) greater than 0.08 g/dL and more than half were above 0.15 g/dL.

Despite the slowed progress in recent years, most experts agree that further reductions in alcohol-related crashes are possible. The fundamental methods of reducing alcohol-related crashes are to reduce excessive drinking and to deter driving while impaired by alcohol. By adopting strategies described in the Guide, or by improving the implementation of these strategies where they are already in place, states can further reduce their alcohol-related crashes and the variety of health and economic problems they cause.

Objectives and Representative Strategies

✓ Reduce excessive drinking and underage drinking.

- Increase state excise tax on beer
- Require responsible beverage service policies for alcohol servers and retailers.



- Conduct well-publicized compliance checks of alcohol retailers to reduce sales to underage persons.

✓ Enforce DWI laws

- Conduct regular well-publicized DWI checkpoints.
- Enhance DWI detection through special patrols and related traffic enforcement.
- Publicize zero-tolerance laws for drivers under age.

✓ Prosecute, sanction and treat DWI offenders

- Suspend driver's license administratively upon arrest.

- Establish stronger penalties for BAC test refusal than for test failure.
- Eliminate diversion programs and plea bargains to non-alcohol offenses

✓ **Control high BAC and repeat offenders**

- Seize vehicles or vehicle license plates administratively upon arrest.
- Require ignition interlocks as a condition for license reinstatement.
- Incarcerate offenders.

✓ **Related strategies:** Public information programs, better enforcement of traffic laws, improving safety management systems, and strategies detailed in other emphasis area guides.

How the Implementation Guide Helps You

The guide lists practical countermeasure strategies categorized by relative cost to implement. Many of these strategies have been formally evaluated to demonstrate effectiveness. Others lack formal evaluation, but have been implemented with promising results.

The guide lays out the technical attributes of each countermeasure strategy in detail: target audience, expected effectiveness, keys to success, potential difficulties, appropriate measures and data, and associated need for support services.

The guide discusses organizational, institutional, and policy issues; issues affecting implementation time; costs involved; training and other personnel needs; and legislative needs (if any).



Web-Based Support for More Information

Backing up the guide is a series of appendixes and exhibits that provide in-depth information useful to anyone implementing this part of the Strategic Highway Safety Plan, together with a collection of documents providing background, data, and information of significant value to state and local implementers.

This guide is one in a series developed to assist states in their efforts to improve highway safety. Copies of the plan, the guides, the Integrated Safety Management System, the Self-Assessment Tool, and related

Printed copies of the guides and the Integrated Safety Management Process can be obtained from:

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 500 Fifth St., NW
 Washington, DC 20001-2721

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Implementing the AASHTO Strategic Highway Safety Plan



documents, may be obtained on the Internet at safety.transportation.org.