

Celebrate Safely This New Year's Eve



New Year's Eve is a time to celebrate. But for hundreds of people each year, the week between Christmas and New Year's Day proves fatal.

According to fatality data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, over the last five years an average of 300 people died in drunk driving fatalities between Christmas and New Year's Day. Holiday celebrations, and New Year's Eve festivities in particular, tend to include alcohol, raising the stakes during this festive yet too often fatal time of year.

The sobering statistics provided by the NHTSA don't have to prevent people from toasting a new year. In fact, there are many ways to have fun this New Year's Eve without putting yourself in harm's way.

• Don't overindulge in alcohol. For many people, overindulging in alcohol is part and parcel during New Year's Eve celebrations. Such behavior puts everyone at risk, even people who

don't drive. According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, conservative estimates suggest that roughly one-half of sexual assaults on American women involve alcohol consumption by the perpetrator, victim or both. While alcohol and its relationship to traffic fatalities draw the bulk of the attention on New Year's Eve, even people who don't intend to drive should recognize the dangers of overindulging in alcohol and drink responsibly.

• Arrange for transportation. If you need a car to get around on New Year's Eve and plan to drink alcohol, arrange for someone else to do your driving for you. Groups of friends should choose someone to be their designated driver or pool their money and hire a taxi or bus service for the night so no one who's been drinking gets behind the wheel. The NHTSA even offers a free app called SaferRide that is compatible with Apple and Android devices and enables users to call



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If you're hosting a party at home, do so responsibly, making sure none of your guests overindulge, and make the party less about drinking and more about having fun.

a taxi or a friend to be picked up.

• Host responsibly. Even people who don't intend to leave their homes can take steps to make New Year's Eve safer for everyone. If you're hosting a party at home, do so responsibly, making sure none of your guests overindulge and making the party less about drinking and more about having fun. Shift the focus from toasting drinks to games and ac-

tivities that don't include alcohol. Make sure to have plenty of food and nonalcoholic beverages on hand and encourage people who are drinking to eat full meals and drink water throughout the night. People who fill up on food and water during the party may feel full, which may discourage them from having extra drinks. While many people will expect to drink alcohol on New Year's

Eve, don't stock up on too much alcohol, the availability of which may encourage guests to overindulge. Hosts also should keep the phone numbers of local services handy just in case some guests cannot drive themselves home safely.

New Year's Eve should be as festive as possible. Celebrating responsibly can ensure everyone has a fun and safe time.

Intervene to Prevent Driving Under the Influence

When it comes to driving under the influence of both cannabis and alcohol, most Washingtonians do not believe it is safe and do not engage in this behavior. That's according to a new study of Washington's traffic safety culture, commissioned by the Washington Traffic Safety Commission (WTSC). The study explores the values, beliefs and behaviors regarding driving under the influence of alcohol and cannabis (DUICA). "We've seen an increase in the number of traffic deaths where the drivers involved were under the influence of two or more substances, or poly-drugs, usually cannabis and alcohol," said Shelly Baldwin, WTSC spokesperson. "The good news is most people in Washington believe driving impaired is unsafe and unacceptable."

The survey showed that nine percent of Washingtonians report driving after marijuana and alcohol use. These people were also most likely to believe, mistakenly, that using cannabis after drinking helps sober them up.

"This mistaken belief is playing out with deadly consequences on our roadways," said Baldwin. "The fact is using marijuana after drinking

alcohol increases crash risk. While some people surveyed felt that using marijuana after drinking calms them, this feeling of calmness should not be interpreted as a sign they are safe to drive."

The study, conducted by the Center for Health and Safety Culture (CHSC) in the Western Transportation Institute of Montana State University, found that among adults in Washington:

- 81 percent are concerned about traffic safety
- 78 percent do not drive within two hours of consuming alcohol
- 85 percent do not drive within two hours of consuming cannabis
- 91 percent do not drive within two hours of consuming both
- 81 percent have a negative attitude about DUICA
- 83 percent believe it is unacceptable to drive within two hours of consuming alcohol and cannabis
- Most agree that impairment begins as soon as you start consuming alcohol or cannabis.

The survey also explored "intervening behavior," or helpful actions people take to prevent someone from driving

impaired. Among adults in Washington who were in a situation to intervene, 81 percent took steps to prevent someone from driving impaired.

People who intervened were most likely to arrange a ride for the impaired person, engage someone else to prevent the person from driving, or arrange for the person to stay until they are sober.

Nicholas Ward, Ph.D. of the Center for Health and Safety Culture and who conducted the study, said, "These results show that Washingtonians have healthy beliefs, attitudes and behaviors about intervening to

prevent driving after consuming alcohol and cannabis, but there are opportunities to improve. Intervening should be normal and appreciated."

Baldwin said, "Most Washingtonians are reaching out to help keep impaired drivers off the road. It's what we do as friends, family and neighbors, and is part of being a good Washingtonian. While I remain concerned about people who drive impaired, this study gives me hope that all of us have the desire to help. I am thankful for all the people who help keep impaired drivers off our roads by intervening."

The Washington Traffic Safety Commission (WTSC) is Washington's designated highway safety office. We share a vision with numerous other state and local public agencies. That vision is to reduce traffic fatalities and serious injuries to zero. The WTSC Director is the Governor's Highway Safety Representative, which is a designated position each state is required to have in order to qualify for federal traffic safety funding. Our Commission is made up of 26 employees and 10 Commissioners chaired by Washington's Governor Jay Inslee.

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