

Holidays don't mix with drinking and driving

Intoxicated drivers are 40 times more likely to get in crash

Having a drink with friends and family to celebrate the holiday season is a commonality among many Americans. Raise a glass and toast to good times and more to come.

'Tis the season to being more responsible – especially behind the wheel.

Alcohol-related car fatalities spike during the final six weeks of the year. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that drunk-driving crashes nearly triple from Thanksgiving to New Year's Day.

Drunk drivers comprise approximately one-third of all motor-vehicle deaths. On average, alcohol-related car deaths occur every 45 minutes. The numbers are disheartening, but what makes it more tragic is that these deaths and injuries are preventable. It requires drivers to make responsible decisions for it to become reality.

"A DUI conviction can weigh heavily on your pocketbook," said Theresa Podguski, AAA East Central director of legislative affairs. "But getting in your car after a night of drinking could cost you more than just money. It can result in lives lost."

A driver's blood-alcohol content (BAC) depends on many factors. How much and how quickly did a person drink? What is the person's body



DON'T MIX – Drinking and driving is a recipe for disaster. It's wise to pass the keys if you've had too much to drink. *Image: Brian Jackson. Adobe Stock.*

weight and gender? Research indicates that alcohol's effect on females tends to be stronger and last longer than it does on males.

The risk of getting into a car crash rapidly increases after a BAC of .05 – one or two drinks. A person with a .08 BAC – the legal limit in all 50 states – is

40 times more likely to be killed in a crash than a sober driver.

Drivers who feel they have had too much to drink should call a friend, a rideshare or cab service. Simply put, don't drive. Never ride in a vehicle that is being driven by a person who is drunk. Time is the only cure for

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intoxication. Coffee and cold showers are myths.

Those hosting parties should make certain guests leave with sober drivers. Take a person's keys if they seem to have had too much to drink. Safety never should be taken for granted, even if the person being protected is unruly and doesn't want to stay.

AAA works year-round in educating motorists about driving practices that will help keep them safe and reduce drug- and alcohol-related crashes. Together, we can make everyone safer and keep alcohol- and drug-impaired drivers off the road.

Common sense saves lives, lessens injuries and/or avoids a lifetime of regret.

'Tis the season, indeed.

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