NCADD
NATIONAL COUNCIL ON ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG DEPENDENCE, INC.

The primary concern about **drugged driving** is clear….**it is dangerous**. Being under the influence of any drug that acts on the brain and central nervous system impairs a driver's motor skills, reaction time and judgment. Drugged driving puts not only the driver at risk, but also passengers and others who share the road and nearby walkways.

Drugs impair motor skills, reaction time, and judgment

and negatively affect driving skills

How Many People Are Using Drugs and Driving?

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) National Roadside Survey, more than 16% of weekend, nighttime drivers tested positive for illegal, prescription, or over-the-counter (OTC) medications (11% tested positive for illegal drugs). In 2009, 18% of fatally injured drivers tested positive for at least one drug (illegal, prescription and/or over-the-counter).

Even more concerning……the Monitoring the Future Study (MTF) found that 1 in 12 high school seniors reported driving after smoking marijuana.

FACT: Number of Deaths: In 2009, the Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) reported that 3,952 fatally injured drivers tested positive for drug involvement.

Despite a drug's potentially lethal effects when driving, drugged driving laws have not kept up with alcohol-related driving legislation because of the limitations of technology for determining specific levels of impairment based on levels of the drugs in the system. Detection of alcohol, through technology has developed a very effective means of measuring the blood alcohol content (BAC) and level of impairment. For drugs, other than alcohol, no such agreed upon standard like the BAC has been reliably demonstrated.

Legal Response to Drugged Driving:

In 1988, the Department of Transportation (responsible for commercial drivers, airline pilots and train engineers) established the ***per se standard*** for illegal drug use: any evidence of recent illegal drug use was considered a violation of the law.

Now, many states, including Arizona, Delaware, Georgia, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Dakota,

Utah, Virginia, and Wisconsin, have passed *"per se"* laws, in which it is illegal to operate a motor vehicle if there is any detectable level of a prohibited drug or its metabolites in the driver's blood. Although the *per se* standard is not a measure of impairment, it is an indicator of illegal driving behavior.

Drug Evaluation and Classification Programs:

To date, 44 States and the District of Columbia have implemented Drug Evaluation and Classification Programs, designed to train police officers as Drug Recognition Experts. Police officers are taught specific detection skills based on characteristics in a person's appearance and/or behavior that may be associated with drug intoxication. If the officer suspects the driver of drug intoxication, a blood or urine sample is submitted to a laboratory for confirmation.

Why is Drugged Driving Hazardous?

Drugs acting on the brain and central nervous system can negatively affect driving skills: The effects of specific drugs differ depending on how they are used, the amount consumed, the history of the user, and other factors.

How Do Drugs Affect Driving Skills?

Coordination: Effects on nerves/muscles – steering, braking, accelerating, manipulation of vehicle

Reaction time: Insufficient response & reaction

Judgment: Cognitive effects, risk reduction, avoidance of potential hazards, anticipation, risk-taking behavior, inattention, decreased fear, exhilaration, loss of control

Tracking: Staying in lane, maintaining distance

Attention: Divided, not focused. High demand for information processing is severely affected

Perception: 90% of information processed by our brain while driving is visual. Glare resistance and recovery, dark and light adaptation, dynamic visual acuity – all are negatively impacted by drug use.

Marijuana and Driving: Since marijuana is the second most commonly used drug associated with drinking and drugged driving after alcohol, it is important to understand why it is particularly dangerous.

THC, the high producing element in marijuana, affects areas of the brain that control body movements, balance, coordination, memory and judgment. Evidence from both real and simulated driving studies indicate that marijuana negatively affects a driver's attentiveness, perception of time and speed, and ability to draw on information obtained from past experiences.

Research also shows that impairment increases significantly when marijuana use is combined

with alcohol. Studies have found that many drivers test positive for alcohol and THC, making it clear that drinking and drugged driving are often linked behaviors.

For additional statistics and information:

NCADD Fact Sheet: Alcohol and Drug Impaired Driving

But, We Have Made Progress: For decades, NCADD and our National Network of Affiliates have been at the forefront of awareness, education, prevention, treatment and advocacy efforts resulting in the prevention of millions of potential drinking and drugged driving incidents. Due to these efforts, the number of alcohol-impaired driving deaths have decreased 48.5% from 1982 (26,172) to 2006 (13,470).

DRUGGED DRIVING IS A HAZARDOUS COMBINATION

DON'T DRINK, DRUG AND DRIVE