

Getting to Zero Alcohol-Impaired Driving Fatalities:

Vision Zero

Background:

In January 2018, the National Academy of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine released a report entitled: *Getting to Zero Alcohol-Impaired Driving Fatalities, A Comprehensive Approach to a Persistent Problem*¹. The goal: to reduce alcohol-impaired driving fatalities to zero.

The report provides a thorough review and recommends the most relevant, evidence-based interventions aimed at reducing alcohol-impaired driving crashes.

Methods:

In order to provide a detailed list of recommendations, the committee examined the available literature on alcohol-impaired driving interventions that target the following: alcohol consumption, drinking to impairment, driving while impaired, and the post-crash and/or post-arrest phase. Through this literature review, the report aimed to identify which interventions are most promising to prevent alcohol-impaired driving injuries and fatalities given the current state of knowledge and environment. The report does not prioritize specific recommendations, but rather focused on population-level strategies aimed at providing the maximum benefit at the population level.

Critical Data:

The report provides a number of key data points, including:

- Each day 29 people in the United States die in an alcohol-impaired driving crash; that is 1 person every 49 minutes.
- On average since 1982, one-third of all traffic fatalities were alcohol-impaired driving fatalities with more than 10,400 people killed in 2016.
- In 2016, alcohol-impaired driving fatalities accounted for 28 percent of traffic deaths—the largest percentage of all traffic fatalities.
- Almost 40 percent of alcohol-impaired driving fatalities are victims other than the drinking driver.

The Interventions:

As previously noted, the following interventions are not prioritized in any way, instead they are organized into the following groups: alcohol consumption/drinking to impairment, driving while impaired, and arrest and/or post-crash.

Alcohol Consumption/Drinking to Impairment

1. **Increase alcohol taxes:** increase alcohol taxes significantly. There is research suggesting that a doubling of alcohol taxes would lead to an 11 percent reduction in traffic crash deaths.
2. **Implement policies to address physical availability of alcohol:** limit or reduce alcohol availability, including restrictions on the number of alcohol outlets and the days/hours of alcohol sales.

¹ National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2018. *Getting to zero alcohol-impaired driving fatalities: A comprehensive approach to a persistent problem*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. doi: <https://doi.org/10.17226/24951>

- 3. Implement policies to reduce illegal sales of alcohol:** strengthen laws and enforcement to stop illegal alcohol sales (i.e., sales to minors, sales to intoxicated adults).
- 4. Regulate alcohol marketing:** implement standards for alcohol marketing across all media and establish consequences for violations. Also promote and fund counter-marketing campaigns.

Driving While Impaired

- 5. Lower blood alcohol concentration (BAC) per se laws to 0.05%:** set alcohol impaired driving laws to 0.05% BAC, with accompanying media campaigns and visible enforcement efforts.
- 6. Conduct frequent, publicized sobriety checkpoints:** conduct frequent sobriety checkpoints in conjunction with widespread publicity to promote awareness of these initiatives.
- 7. Increase the availability of transportation alternatives:** increase the availability, convenience, affordability, and safety of transportation alternatives for drinkers who might otherwise drive.

Post-crash and/or Arrest

- 8. Evaluation and treatment of binge drinking and alcohol use disorders (AUDs):** health care systems and health insurers should cover and facilitate effective evaluation, prevention, and treatment strategies for binge drinking and AUDs including screening, brief intervention, and referral to treatment (SBIRT), cognitive behavioral therapy, and medication-assisted therapy.
- 9. Implement DWI courts using standards set by National Center for DWI Courts:** states should implement DWI courts, guided by the evidence-based standards set by the National Center for DWI Courts.
- 10. Increased use of ignition interlocks and extended monitoring periods:** states should enact all-offender ignition interlock laws to reduce alcohol-impaired driving fatalities.

Promising Initiatives

The following initiatives were not included as specific recommendations, but were included as promising initiatives that may need improvement, additional research, or may have future, positive impacts.

- Universal primary seatbelt laws
- Future use of the Driver Alcohol Detection System for Safety (DADSS)
- Improving administrative license suspension/revocation laws
- Coordinated and continuous learning trauma care system
- Professional education and training (judiciary, law enforcement, health professionals)
- Limits on diversion programs and plea agreements
- Use of systems alcohol and location monitoring programs

The full report can be found here: <http://nap.edu/24951>