



Drinking and Driving

eSafetyLine

The ABCs of BAC

We often hear on the news about celebrities, star athletes and even regular folks being charged with DWI or DUI. Many times a fact included in the story is the individual's blood alcohol concentration or BAC. Every state has made it illegal to drive with a BAC of .08 or higher. But what does all this mean? The BAC is a measurement of the alcohol present in a person's body. Alcohol quickly moves through the wall of the stomach and small intestines into the blood and is then circulated throughout the body. Because of how quickly alcohol is absorbed, the BAC can be measured as soon as 30 minutes after someone has had a drink.

There are many factors that affect someone's BAC and how quickly it rises. Some of these factors:

- The number of drinks consumed. This is quite straightforward: the more drinks you have the higher the BAC will be. There is no way around this fact, BAC measures how much alcohol there is in the blood and that increases with the amount of alcohol put into the body.
- How fast you drink. The faster you drink the faster the BAC will rise. Drinking more slowly over a longer period of time causes the BAC to rise more slowly. However slowly you drink, you will eventually raise your BAC.
- Gender. Whether you are male or female affects your BAC. Females tend to have less water in their cells and more body fat per pound than males. Alcohol doesn't go into fat cells as easily as other cells, so more alcohol stays in the blood of women.
- Your weight. The more someone weighs, there is more water present in the body. This water will dilute the alcohol and lower the BAC.
- Food in the stomach. Alcohol absorption is slowed by food that is present in the stomach.

Some of these factors seem to contradict one another and further complicate if someone has had enough alcohol so they shouldn't drive. It is VERY difficult to determine your own level of impairment. Small amounts of alcohol affect a person's brain and the ability to drive; many feel that they are "fine" after several drinks. This failure to realize that you are impaired by alcohol is often a symptom of being impaired. This may seem quite confusing and very difficult to determine if you are impaired and if you should drive.

The safest option is that if you've had ANY alcohol to drink, have someone drive you home. In single-vehicle crashes, the risk of a young male driver with a BAC between .08 and .10 is 52 times higher than for a driver with a BAC of zero. The quickest way to ruin a good night is to get pulled over for DWI or end up in a car accident that may kill you or someone else.

Discussion Questions

How does gender affect the rate that alcohol is absorbed?

What is the best way to prevent a drunken driving arrest or accident?

MEETING / TRAINING ATTENDANCE ROSTER

COMPANY: _____

_____ SAFETY MEETING

JOB/DEPT: _____

_____ SAFETY TRAINING

DATE: ___/___/___

TIME: _____

TOPICS ADDRESSED: _____

EMPLOYEE'S SIGNATURES

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

EMPLOYEE SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: _____

ACTION TAKEN: _____

Supervisor's Signature

_____/_____/_____
Date

Safety Coordinator's Signature

_____/_____/_____
Date