**Five Minutes for Safety**

**Impaired Driving**

**Objective:** Lead employees through a conversation that covers the definition of being impaired and how that affects driving safely; review company/organization impaired driving and/or alcohol and drug use policies, if applicable.

**Opening:**

Whether or not you chose to drink or use other substances (legal or illegal), there’s no question that they play a big role in our society. When you’re socializing with friends, attending a sporting event or relaxing at home with family, alcohol is often present. And we certainly see it in the media through advertising or as part of the shows we watch.

But we all need to remember that alcohol is a drug. It is one of many known as central nervous system depressants. Its companions in this category are well-known drugs like barbiturates and tranquilizers (Valium, Xanax, etc.).

Alcohol acts on the central nervous system in exactly the same way as these other drugs. It slows us down. And by doing that it can have a significant, and negative, effect on what we’re doing with serious consequences. That includes driving or operating equipment.

We’re focused on alcohol today, but I’m sure you know that many other drugs – both legal like CBD or illegal like meth – can also impair driving ability.

**Questions for leading the conversation**

Let’s take a minute to see how much we actually know about alcohol with a little quiz (ask them to shout out the answers.)

**Question:** What is stronger: A mixed drink, a beer, or a glass of wine?  
**Answer:** All have just about the same amount of alcohol! Let's figure it out!

* Beer: 12 ounces at 5% alcohol = 0.6 (six tenths) ounce alcohol
* Wine: 5 ounces at 12% alcohol = 0.6-ounce alcohol
* Whisky, Vodka, Gin, etc.: 1.5 ounces (a "shot") at 40% alcohol = 0.6-ounce alcohol

**Question:** Alcohol basically affects four of the abilities we need most while driving. What do you think they are?  
**Answer:**

* Judgment
* Alertness/Attention
* Vision
* Reaction Time

Now let's look at each of those four impacts individually.

**Question:** When judgment is affected, how can it influence our driving? (Ask for ideas)  
**Answer:** (Review list)

* Speed
* Distance
* Our skill
* Other traffic
* Our need to use a safety belt

**Question:** When our alertness is affected, how can it influence our driving? (Ask for ideas)  
**Answer:** (Review list) Alcohol reduces awareness of:

* Conditions (things like light, road, weather, traffic)
* Other traffic
* Road conditions (Is it 2-lane or 4-lane, curbs, surface, traction)
* Things going on around us (pedestrians, traffic signals, etc.)

**Question:** When our vision is affected, how can it influence our driving? (Ask for ideas)  
**Answer:** The simple answer – we're unable to perceive hazards quickly enough to prevent a collision.  
  
**Question:** How can increased reaction time affect our driving? (Ask for ideas)  
**Answer:** It takes longer to stop! Many of us have been locked into the idea of “drunk driving”. We feel our alcohol concentration must be high (.08%) in order to be under the influence of alcohol. In reality, alcohol does not sneak up and hit us on the head at .08%. All of these effects begin with our first drink. Think about it. One drink makes us a less capable driver than no drinks.

**Messages and Facts**  
Here are some things to know about the impact of drinking and driving:

* Minnesotans drink and drive. More than 100,000 Minnesotans self-reported drinking and driving at least once in a 30-day period in 2020.
* Of the 394 fatalities on Minnesota roads in 2020, 79 were known to be drunk-driving related.
* About 1 in 7 Minnesotans has at least one DWI. Multiple DWIs may be a symptom of alcohol or substance use disorder.
* A DWI can cost upwards of $20,000 in jail time, loss of license, and higher insurance premiums.

**Review company/organization, if applicable**

**Closing reinforcement**

In closing, in addition to the information we reviewed, I want to stress two things.

First ­— Talk to your doctor or health care provider if you are concerned with your own or someone else’s alcohol or drug use.

Second — Everyone is responsible for keeping our roadways safe. If you are planning to drink or take drugs that may affect your ability to drive, do not drive. If you need to drive, plan to avoid alcohol or drugs that may affect your ability to drive.

**Sources:** Minnesota Department of Public Safety,

Office of Traffic Safety

Minnesota Department of Public Health