



Get the Facts: Impaired is Impaired

In a Nutshell: If you're doing, experiencing or ingesting anything that reduces your driving capacity, you're impaired and a risk behind the wheel.

What do we mean by impaired driving?

If your attention and mental capacity are not fully focused on the operation of your vehicle and at a level that means you can safely see and react to typical driving events like traffic lights, or emerging risks such as a pedestrian, bicycle or another driver, you're impaired.

Some impairment behaviors are illegal. In Minnesota this includes driving with blood alcohol levels at or over 0.08 or failing to follow hands-free requirements for cell phone use. Keep in mind that motorists can be arrested for DWI at lower levels. And, as Minnesota and the majority of other U.S. states relax laws on the use of substances like marijuana and CBD, it's critical that drivers recognize that any level of use can impair their behind-the-wheel response.¹

Prescribed or over-the-counter drugs (remember to check the label) can impair driving ability, as can lack of sleep. Both can lead to drowsiness.

Even fiddling with the radio or turning to talk to-your kids can take your eyes and mind off the road at a critical moment. And law enforcement officials have countless stories about people eating, grooming, reading or engaging in other activities that impair driving.

Why does it matter?

Impaired driving kills and injures thousands each year. These are ALL preventable by recognizing and avoiding substances and situations that can affect driving abilities, as well as eliminating possible distractions.

Play it safe!

Simply put, don't drive if you're impaired.

Impaired Driving's Consequences

- *Every day more than 30 people in the U.S. die in drunk-driving crashes; that's nearly 11,000 deaths. In Minnesota, 124 people died in drunken driving accidents – a quarter of the state's overall fatalities.*
- *Taking your eyes off the road for 5 seconds – the time it takes to read or send a text – is equivalent to driving down a football field with a blindfold.*
- *An estimated 100,000 police-reported crashes each year involve drowsy driving.*

Remember – These deaths and injuries were preventable!





Sources: National Safety Council, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

Driving Impairment: Stay Safe Tips

If you've been drinking or ingesting another substance that causes impairment:

- Designate a sobor driver.
- Limit alcoholic drinks based at social events; serve non-alcoholic beverages.
- Use ride share services and taxis for yourself and friends.

If you're tired and could get drowsy:

- If can't remember the last few miles, drift from your lane, yawn frequently or find yourself doing the "head bob," pull over for a rest.
- Get a good night's sleep. The average person needs 8 hours per night.
- Take a buddy along. They can watch for early warning signs of fatigue; keep you awake with conversation and take their turn behind the wheel.
- Schedule regular stops. Ever 100 miles or two hours is recommended.
- Avoid alcohol, over the counter and prescribed medications and other substances that may impair driving performance.
- Take breaks!

If you're tempted by distractions:

- Put your phone away, send calls to voicemail or go hands-free. It's the law in Minnesota and most states.
- Fiddle with the controls in advance – pre-set climate, sound systems and more before the vehicle is in motion.
- Plan your route and leave plenty of time to avoid stress – another distraction.
- Secure kids, pets and cargo. And if there's a need to intervene in a squabble or other incident, pull over safely!

