BRAKE ECHOES POLICE CALLS WARNING YOUNG PEOPLE OF DANGERS OF DRINK AND DRUG DRIVING

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Brake echoes police calls warning young people of dangers of drink and drug driving

Brake, the road safety charity, has praised police for their efforts to catch drink and drug drivers over the festive period but has expressed concern that a significant minority of drivers – especially among the younger age group – are continuing to endanger lives.

An increasingly intelligence-led approach by officers resulted in fewer breath tests this year, down to 133,996, but a higher rate of drivers testing positive, with 5,885, or 4.39%, failing breath tests according to figuresreleased by the Association of Chief Police Officers.

Among these, 28,228 under-25s were tested, with a 6.33% failure rate, compared to 3.94% of over-25s.

Brake is warning there is still a long way to go to stamp out the menace of drink and drug driving throughout the year. According to a Brake and Direct Line survey, many continue to take the deadly risk of driving after drinking and many feel unable to speak out to stop others doing it [1].

Brake also warns that many who pass the breath test could be unsafe to drive due to the England, Wales and Northern Ireland's high drink drive limit. Scotland reduced its drink drive limit on 5 December 2014, to 50mg per 100ml of blood. Brake is renewing its calls for a zero tolerance drink drive limit of 20mg per 100ml blood. **See calls for action below and the facts on why it should be none for the road.**

Brake is also urging the government to give greater priority to traffic policing and ensure sufficient resourcing is available for vital drink and drug driving enforcement, following significant cuts [2], and especially ahead of anew drug drive law coming into force in England and Wales on 2 March.

Brake urges all drivers never to drink any alcohol or take any drugs before driving: not a drop, not a drag. **See Brake's advice below.**

Julie Townsend, deputy chief executive, Brake, said: "It is encouraging to see police increasingly using an intelligence-led approach to catching drink and drug drivers, and their Christmas and summer enforcement campaigns remain vitally important. Drink driving is still one of the biggest killers on our roads and we have some way to go before we persuade all drivers to commit to never driving after drinking. It's especially worrying that the message is not getting through to a significant minority of young people. People who persist in drink driving needlessly put the lives of others at risk and too often cause crashes that devastate families and communities, all for the sake of a drink. Our message is clear: it should be none for the road."

The police figures coincide with Brake launching a **new interactive e-learning resource**, 'Sober up', produced with sponsorship from Hitachi Capital Driving Instructor Solutions. The resource is available at brake.org.uk/soberup and can be used by drivers and families directly, as well as by educators, employers and road safety practitioners to engage groups of young people and drivers on the issue of drink and drug driving.

Read about Brake's 'not a drop, not a drag' campaign.

Facts

One in six deaths on UK roads are caused by drink drivers over the current legal limit [3], but drivers with even 20-50mg alcohol per 100ml of blood are at least three times more likely to die in a crash than those with no alcohol in their blood [4]. This is because even small amounts of alcohol affect drivers' reaction times, judgment and co-ordination. Alcohol also makes it impossible for drivers to assess their own impairment because it creates a false sense of confidence and means drivers are more inclined to take risks and believe they are in control when they are not [5].

Brake's advice

Even very small amounts of alcohol affect drivers' reaction times and hazard perception, making them much more likely to crash. This is the case even if the driver doesn't feel drunk or even tipsy. So the only

way to ensure you're safe if you're driving this festive season is not drink any alcohol before driving, and never drive the morning after having more than one or two drinks. And as a passenger, only accept a lift with a driver who's had no alcohol at all.

Planning ahead to get home safely will help you avoid getting into an awkward or risky situation, such as having to refuse a lift from a driver who has had alcohol. If you're getting a lift back from a night out with someone, make sure they are 100% on board with not having any alcohol at all. Always have a plan B just in case a designated driver lets you down, or arrange from the outset to get a taxi or public transport instead.

Calls for government action

Brake calls for a zero tolerance limit of 20mg alcohol per 100ml of blood, to send a clear message that it should be none for the road. This allows for naturally occurring alcohol in the body, and is a limit set by numerous other countries including Sweden, Poland and Greece. The EU recommends a limit of no more than 50mg, and within the EU only Malta shares the UK's limit of 80mg alcohol. Governments in Scotland and Northern Ireland have announced intentions to reduce their limits to 50mg alcohol per 100ml blood. In Northern Ireland, newly qualified drivers and commercial drivers will have a zero tolerance limit of 20mg.

Brake

Brake is a national road safety charity that exists to stop the needless deaths and serious injuries that happen on roads every day, make streets and communities safer for everyone, and care for families bereaved and injured in road crashes. Brake promotes road safety awareness, safe and sustainable road use, and effective road safety policies. We do this through national campaigns, community education, services for road safety professionals and employers, and by coordinating the UK's flagship road safety event every November, Road Safety Week. Brake is a national, government-funded provider of support to families and individuals devastated by road death and serious injury, including through a helpline and support packs.

Brake was founded in the UK in 1995, and now has domestic operations in the UK and New Zealand, and works globally to promote action on road safety.

Follow Brake on Twitter or Facebook. Follow Julie Townsend on Twitter.

Road crashes are not accidents; they are devastating and preventable events, not chance mishaps. Calling them accidents undermines work to make roads safer, and can cause insult to families whose lives have been torn apart by needless casualties.

End notes

[1] Christmas party-goers urged to help save lives by standing up to 'designated drivers' who drink, as survey shows we're still too timid, Brake, 10 December 2013
[2] Huge roads policing cuts put public at risk, warns charity, Brake, 23 January 2012
[3] Reported Road Casualties in Great Britain: 2012 Annual Report, Department for Transport, 2013, includes those drivers who were involved in crashes but were under the legal limit.
[4] National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence, 2010. Review of effectiveness of laws limiting blood alcohol concentration levels to reduce alcohol-related road injuries and deaths, London: National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence
[5] ibid

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