Charity Appeals To Drivers: Not A Drop, Not A Drag This Festive Season As Police Crackdown Starts In Scotland

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Charity appeals to drivers: not a drop, not a drag this festive season, as police crackdown starts and new law comes into force in Scotland

Brake, the road safety charity, is calling on drivers to stay sober if driving over the Christmas period – not a drop, not a drag – or plan to get home by taxi or public transport, to prevent devastating casualties.

The call comes as the Association of Chief Police Officers' and Police Scotland's annual drink and drug driving enforcement campaign kicks off. The month long campaign sees forces across the UK stepping up checks to catch drivers risking lives. It's been given renewed impetus as a new, lower drink drive limit comes into force in Scotland, from 5 December.

Latest available figures, from 2012, show that 230 people were killed (one in eight road deaths) and 1,210 were seriously injured in crashes involving someone over the limit [1]. It's estimated a further 65 deaths are caused annually by drivers who have been drinking but are under the limit [2]. Drug driving is estimated to cause 200 deaths each year [3].

Brake is renewing calls for a zero tolerance drink drive limit of 20mg alcohol per 100ml of blood, in line with evidence that even one drink dramatically increases crash risk [4], and to send a clear message it should be none for the road. A blood alcohol level of 20-50mg increases your likelihood of crashing three-fold [5].

The Scottish Government has introduced a lower limit of 50mg of alcohol per 100ml of blood, coming into force on 5 Dec, and has begun a multi-media campaign to raise awareness of the new law. The rest of the UK retains a 80mg limit – higher than all other EU countries except Malta.

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

Julie Townsend, deputy chief executive, Brake, said:"As a charity that supports bereaved and injured road crash victims, we witness the suffering that drink and drug driving inflict, and appeal to everyone to help put a stop to it. Drink and drug driving deaths and injuries are cruel and needless, ending and ruining lives and leaving traumatised families to pick up the pieces. If you're driving home from celebrations this festive season, it's vital you take your responsibility for people's safety seriously, and stay completely off booze and drugs. It's a fact that even small amounts of alcohol or drugs increase your risk of crashing.

"We are calling on the UK government to take action on drink driving. We have the highest drink-drive limit in Europe, sending out the dreadful message that a drink or two before driving is acceptable. We welcome the new lower limit in Scotland as a positive stepping stone towards zero tolerance. The evidence shows that a tough approach helps prevent casualties."

The **Scottish Government's cabinet secretary for justice, Kenny MacAskill, said**: "With the approval of Parliament, the new drink drive limit will come into force on December 5, making our roads safer and saving lives. We are doing everything we can to make sure everyone is informed about the new lower level.

"A persistent minority of people are still getting behind the wheel after drinking - the best approach is to have nothing at all, alcohol at any level impairs driving.

"This new law will bring Scotland into line with most of Europe and hopefully reduce drink drive arrests and prosecutions, as we have already seen in the Republic of Ireland, where drivers adjusted their behaviour to take account of the lower limit."

Facts

One in eight deaths on UK roads are caused by drink drivers over the **current legal limit of 80mg alcohol per 100ml blood** [6]. 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 [7]. This is because even very small amounts of alcohol affect drivers' reaction times, judgment and co-ordination [8]. 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 [9].

Westminster rejected recommendations for a lower limit in the North Report into drink and drug driving andTransport Select Committee inquiry into the issue. We now have the highest drink drive limit in Europe, alongside Malta. Evidence is clear that lowering drink drive limits results in fewer casualties [10], even reducing 'high-level' drink driving [11].

Read more at www.brake.org.uk/facts.

Advice

Brake calls on drivers to never drive after drinking any amount of alcohol – not a drop – and appeals to everyone to look out for friends and family by speaking out against drink driving.

There are plenty of alternatives to driving if you want to have a drink. Plan ahead for how you will get home by walking (if there's a safe route), taking public transport or booking a taxi. If you need to drive then decide on a designated driver who doesn't drink any alcohol at all, and make sure they stick to this.

Driving after drinking alcohol significantly increases your risk of crashing, potentially killing or injuring yourself, you passengers or someone else. Even if you feel sober after one drink, your reaction times will have slowed and your crash risk increased [12].

Don't drink if you are driving early the next morning. There's no way of knowing exactly how long it takes to sober up completely after drinking, but it's longer than many people think. As a rough guide you should allow one hour to absorb alcohol, plus at least one hour for each unit consumed – but it could take longer, so you should always leave extra time to be safe. If you have to drive the next morning, limit yourself to no more than one or two drinks. If you have a lot to drink, you may be impaired for all of the following day.

Brake is calling on members of the public to play their part in making roads safer by **signing Brake's Pledge atwww.brake.org.uk/pledge**, to make a personal commitment to use roads safely and sustainably, and help reduce the lives lost needlessly on our roads.

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] Reported road casualties Great Britain 2012, Department for Transport, 2013

[2] Reducing the BAC limit to 50mg – what can we expect to gain?, Professor Richard E Allsop, Centre for Transport Studies University College London (PACTS, 2005)

[3] Report of the review of drink and drug driving, Sir Peter North CBE QC, 2010

[4] The relationship between serious injury and blood alcohol concentration (BAC) in fatal motor vehicle accidents: BAC = 0.01% is associated with significantly more dangerous accidents than BAC = 0.00%,

University of California at San Diego, 2011

[5] 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

Reported road casualties Great Britain 2012, Department for Transport, 2013

[6] Reported road casualties Great Britain 2012, Department for Transport, 2013

[7] 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

[8] The relationship between serious injury and blood alcohol concentration (BAC) in fatal motor vehicle accidents: BAC = 0.01% is associated with significantly more dangerous accidents than BAC = 0.00%, University of California at San Diego, 2011

[9] 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

[10] Research by Sheffield University, which examined casualty trends in England and Wales against the success of lowering the limit in other European Countries and Australia, estimated that lowering the limit to 50mg would save in the region of 77-168 deaths each year in England and Wales alone. (R Rafia, A Brennan, Modelling methods to estimate the potential impact of lowering the blood alcohol concentration limit from 80 mg/100 ml to 50 mg/100 ml in England and Wales, Report to the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence, School of Health and Related Research (ScHARR), University of Sheffield, 2010). Brake believes lowering the limit to 20mg is likely prevent even more deaths, given evidence showing the detrimental effects on driving of 20-50mg of alcohol per 100ml of blood. When Sweden lowered its drink-drive limit from 50mg to 20mg per 100ml of blood, drink-drive deaths fell by 10%. (The Globe 2003 issue 2, Institute of Alcohol Studies, 2003)

[11] Brooks C, Zaal D, Effects of a reduced alcohol limit for driving, Australia: Federal Office of Road Safety , 1993

[12] The relationship between serious injury and blood alcohol concentration (BAC) in fatal motor vehicle accidents: BAC = 0.01% is associated with significantly more dangerous accidents than BAC = 0.00%,University of California at San Diego, 2011

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