Think Before You Drink This Christmas!

Friday 20 December, 2019

Did You Know: Over the festive period, during December alone, an average of 154 drivers A DAY are caught drink driving (1)? That totals to a shocking statistic of 4,774 drivers in just one month!

Drink Driving - How Big Is The Problem?

We are all more than aware of the ever-growing problem of drink driving; however, unsurprisingly, thousands of Brits still try their luck and tackle the roads while over the limit. But how big really is the problem?

Based on research, despite the crackdown on drink drivers, over 70,000 people are caught each year driving over the limit (2). Moreover, the number of deaths caused by drink-driving has now reached an eight-year high with a worrying statistic of up to 270 fatalities (1). This has lead to police forces becoming increasingly vigilant, pulling over more than 98,000 vehicles in December 2017 alone, resulting in up to 91,000 breathalyser tests (3). Together, this totals to approximately 20% of the annual number of breathalyser tests carried out (2).

While there is no harm in celebrating over the festive period, it is imperative to leave the car keys at home if you plan on drinking. It has been proven that drivers are three times more likely to be breathalysed over Christmas and New Year. In fact, one-fifth of drink-driving convictions are caused by drivers getting behind the wheel the morning after a heavy night (2). A huge one-third of tests are not carried out throughout the night, but actually between 7am and 1pm the next day (2)!

What Are The Consequences Of Drink Driving?

It is unlikely to come as a shock that the consequences of drink driving have more than doubled in severity since the law was introduced over 20 years ago. Now, not only can you be charged for being caught driving under the influence of alcohol, but also attempting to get behind the wheel or refusing a breathalyser test. The government-set consequences of drink-driving are as follows:

- **Being in charge of a vehicle** while over the legal limit can lead to 3-months in prison, a £2,500 fine and the possibility of a driving ban (4).
- **Attempting to drive** while over the legal limit results in a 6-month imprisonment sentence, an unlimited fine and a definite driving ban of at least one year (4).
- **Refusing to be tested**, whether this may be a breath, blood or urine sample will land you 6-months in prison, an unlimited fine and minimum of a one-year driving ban (4).
- **Causing death by drink-driving** means an instant 14-year prison sentence, unlimited fine, driving ban for at least two years and a second driving test before your licence is returned (4).

When convicted of drink driving, many culprits are placed into the 'High-Risk Offender' category. The police will consider drivers a high-risk offender if they have been caught driving under the influence of alcohol twice in ten years, were way over the limit or refused to provide a sample. These offenders must pass a full medical examination before authorities even consider giving them their licence back.

How Does Alcohol Affect The Ability To Drive?

While you may be one of the many who believe that they can handle their alcohol, this most definitely doesn't mean that you are exempt from following the rules. Although you may feel completely fine, the alcohol will still have a profound effect on your ability to drive.

- **Lack Of Coordination** - Drinking alcohol causes individuals to lack hand, eye and foot coordination, which are all key factors in driving. This means that while you may know that you need to react to a situation, your body simply will not be able to act in time.
- **Poor Judgement** - Alcohol impacts the brains, which means that it will become increasingly tricky to judge the positioning of other road users, road signs and markings.

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- **Impaired Vision** - Ever had a little too much to drink and can feel your vision becoming blurry? Well, alcohol slows down your eye muscle function and impacts your peripheral vision. This means that you will no longer be able to judge distances or spot upcoming hazards.

- **Increased Drowsiness** - Drinking excess alcohol makes it impossible to concentrate on multiple actions at once, which is vital when driving. A vast percentage of drink driving collisions occur when the driver becomes distracted or unable to respond to an emergency situation.

Staying Safe This Festive Season

We all want to enjoy the festive season hassle-free and on the right side of the law. Although the drink-driving statistics continue to rise, there is no reason why, as a nation, we cannot actively work towards reducing the 2019 statistic. Here are some top tips on how to stay safe this Christmas from driveJohnson's director, Anthony Johnson:

"Planning ahead is the secret to avoiding alcohol-related driving issues. Before setting off, arrange a designated driver (as long as they are happy not to drink) or if you're planning a heavy night, take advantage of public transport. There are always tonnes more taxi drivers on the road over the festive period, so always keep a couple of taxi company numbers saved on your phone. Chip in with a couple of your mates and share a taxi home. Alternatively, if you really must drive, just stick to the mocktails - it's not worth the risk!"

Reference

- https://www.clm.co.uk/blog/drink-driving-rules/
- https://www.gov.uk/drink-driving-penalties

Company Contact: