



Centre for Addiction and Mental Health
Centre de toxicomanie et de santé mentale

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CAMH Position:

Reducing the Harms of Alcohol Related Collisions

July 2002

*A PAHO/WHO
Collaborating Centre*

*Un Centre collaborateur
OPS/OMS*

*Affiliated with the
University of Toronto
Affilié à l'Université
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CAMH Position on Reducing the Harms of Alcohol Related Collisions

The **Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH)** believes that the reduction of deaths and injuries from drunk driving is a public health priority. Achieving this goal involves both societal action and personal responsibility. Because alcohol and driving continue to coexist in our society, proven measures to reduce the harms associated with drinking and driving are required. Based on the weight of the scientific evidence, CAMH supports a number of measures to address the problem of drinking and driving, including:

- lowering of the legal blood alcohol content (BAC) from 80 mg% to 50 mg%;
- mandating server training programs; and
- using ignition interlock devices for the vehicles of convicted drinking drivers among other proven interventions that are currently used.

Lowering the Legal Limit to 50 mg%

Drinking-driving fatalities are still the largest cause of alcohol-related deaths in Canada. Evidence shows that driving skills are significantly impaired at levels of 50 mg% and below, and that collision risks are significantly elevated at BAC levels of 50 mg%. Over 35,000 people died in alcohol-related collisions between 1977 and 1996, and the number injured may have been over 1,000,000. It has been estimated that a 50 mg% legal limit would have prevented between 185 and 555 deaths on Canadian roads in 1996 alone. Reducing the legal limit in the Criminal Code to 50 mg% would be a very reasonable next step in the effort to educate the public about the hazards of driving or operating motorized vehicles of any kind after excessive alcohol consumption.

Server Training Programs

Server training programs were developed to assist those who serve alcohol in identifying situations in which patrons may be served to intoxication, and in taking action to prevent excessive alcohol consumption. Well-designed programs have demonstrated their effectiveness in reaching those goals. Therefore, the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health recommends that all individuals who serve alcohol be required to successfully complete a program of server training, taught by highly qualified instructors and demonstrated to be effective.

Ignition Interlock for Return of Suspended Licenses

The Province of Ontario recently passed legislation that will require convicted drinking drivers to use an ignition interlock as a condition of getting their licence back after a period of suspension. These devices appear to have the ability to reduce recidivism during the period when they are installed on the vehicle of a convicted offender. Therefore, CAMH recommends that the ignition interlock requirement for convicted offenders complement, but not replace, existing measures of proven effectiveness, such as license suspensions and other remedial requirements.