



## Impaired driving awareness

BY JANET HOWARD-DUCSAY, HEALTHY EAST VALLEY DRUG FREE COMMUNITIES' COALITION

Special to the Redlands Community News

During the holidays, there are increasingly more cars on the road traveling more frequently and farther distances. Visiting family, holiday parties, shopping trips, longer work hours, and shorter daylight hours keep many on the road with the potential for impaired driving. December is recognized as National Impaired Driving Prevention Month. Impaired driving is responsible for over 31% of traffic crash fatalities. The state of California and the San Bernardino County data reports fall along the same lines. Every 79 seconds, someone is injured or killed in a drunk driving or impaired driving crash.

Many people think that impaired driving refers only to alcohol. It is a major contributor, but since 2019, there has been an uptick in other impaired driving factors, resulting in injuries or crashes. The causes of impaired driving include:

**Drugs:** Opioids, hallucinogenic, mind-altering substances and over-the-counter medications can impair driving, causing drowsiness, altering visual function and affecting mental judgment and motor skill reactions.

**Fatigue:** Long work hours disrupted sleep while caring for an infant or loved one, and emotional or physical stress can impair reaction time while driving. The National Sleep Foundation poll states that 60% of drivers have driven while tired, and another 37%, or 103 million, have fallen asleep at the wheel. Fatigue directly compromises night vision.

**Medical Conditions:** Low blood pressure can contribute to dizziness and slow reaction time while driving. Low blood sugar can also cause dizziness and an altered level of consciousness, which can lead to potential crashes.

**Alcohol:** It is illegal in all 50 states to drive with a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of .08 g/dl or higher, with the exclusion of Utah, where it is .05 g/dl. Impaired driving from alcohol doesn't begin when you reach the BAC limit. In 2022, 2337 people were killed in alcohol-related crashes where the driver had a BAC of .01-.07 g/dl. BAC is measured by blood test, breathalyzer or urine test.

According to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, in 2021, 13.5 million people aged 16 or older drove under the influence of alcohol in the past year, and 11.7 million drove under the influence of selected illicit drugs, including marijuana. With these high statistics, it is crucial to create a plan not to drive impaired for any reason.

**Ideas for prevention of impaired driving:**

1. Plan ahead: Schedule a ride, rideshare, uber, or taxi if you plan to use alcohol or drugs.
2. Agree on a designated driver in the group ahead of time and give them your keys.
3. Install an Ignition Interlock Device (IID) to prevent a car from starting if alcohol is detected.
4. Identify side effects from medications, both prescription and OTC.
5. If you are a person with diabetes, check your blood sugar before driving, keep juice or glucose tablets in the car.

6. Don't get in a car with an impaired driver.

7. Always wear a seatbelt.

8. If you are hosting a party, be responsible for your guests' safety in getting home.

9. A quick nap at a rest stop is not sufficient to make sure you arrive safely.

The only safe blood alcohol level is 0.0. Drinks affect people differently based on their weight, sex, and current medications. Many people have side effects and impairments from alcohol and drugs: slow reflexes and reaction times, slurred speech, memory difficulty, sloppy speech, blurred vision and loud voices of euphoria or anger. Even without these outward symptoms, you can still have impaired driving.

The NHTSA.GOV references BAC and the predicted effects on driving:

- **0.02g/dl 1-2 drinks:** Decline in visual clarity, reduced alertness and judgment, decline in multitasking ability

- **.05g/dl 1-3 drinks:** Reduced coordination and ability to track moving objects such as oncoming cars and pedestrians. Difficulty steering, slow response times

- **.08g/dl 1-4 drinks:** Poor muscle coordination, impaired perception, loss of self-control, short-term memory loss

- **.10 g/dl 2-5 drinks:** Slurred speech, reduced mind processing signals and signs, decreased ability to maintain lane position

- **.15g/dl greater than 5 drinks:** Substantial impairment in controlling vehicle and visual and auditory information processing and reduced muscle and balance control

Many states have zero tolerance for drugged driving. Any measurable amounts of drugs in blood or urine can result in charges for driving under the influence (DUI). Drugged driving can be displayed in symptoms of slow coordination, poor judgment, and reaction time. Reckless and aggressive driving can be seen in persons under the influence of cocaine and methamphetamines.

The number one rule to prevent impaired driving is never to get behind the wheel or get in a car if you or the driver has ingested alcohol or drugs. Let's keep the roads and everyone safe this holiday season and the new year. Make a safety commitment to yourself. Stay well and stay aware. ■

### RETIRED COUPLE

HAS \$1MIL TO LEND ON CA. REAL ESTATE\*

V.I.P. TRUST DEED COMPANY

Buys T.D.s and Buys/Lends on Partial Interests

### OVER 40 YEARS OF FAST FUNDING

Principal  
(818) 248-0000  
Broker

WWW.VIPLoan.COM

\*Sufficient equity required - no consumer loans

Real Estate License #01041073  
CA Department of Real Estate, NMLS #339217  
Private Party loans generally have higher interest rates, points & fees than conventional discount loans



**Darrel Olson**  
Insurance Solutions, Inc.  
License #: 0G11132

Home Life Auto Business Health

308 E. Citrus, Redlands  
909-798-5318

Call or stop by our downtown office so we can help you, your family and/or your business.

www.myagentdarrel.com

