



Tackling drink- and drug-driving

Guidance for fleet managers

This best practice guidance report is one of a series produced by Global Fleet Champions to help anyone who employs people who drive for work to manage occupational road risk, regardless of budget, fleet size or vehicle type.

Global Fleet Champions is a not-for-profit global campaign to prevent crashes and reduce pollution caused by vehicles used for work purposes. Global Fleet Champions is a partnership initiative administered by Brake, the road safety charity.

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Introduction

Driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs is one of the biggest killers on our roads. Employers have a legal, moral and social responsibility to ensure their drivers remain alcohol- and now, more importantly than ever, drug-free at the wheel – preventing crashes and promoting safe and sensible decision-making.

This report will explore the risks associated with driving under the influence of drink and drugs (including over-the-counter and prescription medication) and discuss how fleet managers can address and mitigate the risk to themselves, their employees and the general public, suggesting best practice initiatives to help tackle the problem.

This guidance is based on presentations given at a webinar for fleet managers, focused on tackling the dangers of drink- and drug-driving within a fleet. The webinar was recorded in the UK, but the content of this report will be relevant for fleet managers based anywhere in the world.



Tackling drink- and drug-driving: An overview

by Paul Mountford

Drivers that get behind the wheel under the influence of alcohol or drugs (legal and illegal) are putting their lives, and the lives of others, at significantly increased risk.

The risks of alcohol and drugs on driving

It is well known that the risk of being involved in a road crash increases due to alcohol consumption, however the similar effects of driving under the influence of drugs (both legal and illegal) have only recently reached a wider audience.¹

Alcohol and drugs seriously impair many of the bodily functions needed to drive safely, including²:

- motor skills;
- reaction times;
- coordination; and
- concentration.

In 2018, the World Health Organization (WHO) estimated that 5–35% of all road deaths reported were alcohol-related, and that the number of drug-related road crashes rose during this period.³ The exact figures are difficult to quantify due to the high level of under-reporting and lack of equipment available to test drivers for drugs at the roadside; however in the UK, for example, many police forces are now arresting more drug drivers than drink drivers, and are reporting that a significant proportion of fatal crashes involve drug drivers.⁴

The main signs of impairment for a range of drugs are shown in Table 1.

The dangers of morning-after driving

Unfortunately, many drivers are unaware that the effects of drinking alcohol or taking drugs can last well into the next day, meaning many drivers unintentionally drink- or drug-drive the morning after.

It is very difficult to accurately predict how long it will take to sober up, and it depends on a wide range of factors, including:

Gender: men tend to process alcohol faster than women.

Dehydration: if you haven't drunk enough fluids, alcohol will stay in your system for longer.

Mixers: mixing drinks with water and juice means you absorb alcohol more slowly; fizzy mixers make you absorb alcohol more quickly.

Tiredness: when you're tired your liver becomes less efficient and processes alcohol more slowly, meaning it stays in your system for longer.

To reduce the risk of drink- and drug-driving, fleet managers should strongly discourage drivers from drinking or taking drugs the night before they are scheduled to drive. This may require screening for detection and to act as a deterrent.

AUTHOR

Paul Mountford is a road safety consultant for Road Safety Matters.

Table 1: Signs and symptoms of drug impairment. Key symptoms affecting driving ability are highlighted in red.

MAIN DRUG GROUPS	CANNABIS	STIMULANTS (cocaine, amphetamines and ecstasy)	OPIATES (heroin, codeine, morphine, opium, methadone)	DEPRESSANTS (Alcohol, GBH, benzodiazepines)	HALLUCINOGENS (LSD, magic mushrooms)	INHALANTS (Volatile solvents, aerosols, nitrous oxide, paint)	DISSOCIATIVE ANAESTHETICS (Ketamine, PCP)
Signs and symptoms Keep in mind that there may be variations due to dose, individual reactions or when the drugs are combined with one another and/or alcohol	Smell	Eyelid tremors	Drowsiness	Watery eyes	Dazed appearance	Dizzy	Blank stare
	Dry mouth	Restlessness	Drooping eyelids	Drowsiness	Uncoordinated	Light-headed	High temperature
	Poor coordination	Anxiety	Slow reflexes	Slurred speech	Poor balance	Nausea	Profuse sweating
	Poor balance	Talkative	Slow, quiet speech	Uncoordinated	Distorted time & distance perception	Smell	Increased pain threshold
	Distorted time & distance perception	Euphoria	Facial itching	Slow, sluggish reactions	Nausea	Bloodshot eyes	Sensory distortions
	Poor memory	Irritable	Dry mouth	Mood swings	Hallucinations	Distorted time & distance perception	Hallucination
	Reddish whites of the eyes	Grinding the teeth	Possible euphoria		Confusion of senses	Flushed/sweaty	Sudden violence
	Affects ability to multitask	Faster internal clock	Needle marks			Non-communicative	
		Greater risk taking	Cold skin			Slurred speech	
		Increased short term awareness					

Prescription drugs and over-the-counter medication

by Andrew Drewary

People who drive for work are often unaware that getting behind the wheel after taking certain prescription and over-the-counter (OTC) medications can be just as risky as driving under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs.

The effects of prescription and OTC medication

Certain legal drugs can greatly impair a driver's attentiveness, perception of time, coordination and judgement and increase their risk of being involved in a crash.⁵ Prescription and OTC medications can also directly result in:

- drowsiness;
- blurred vision;
- poor concentration; and
- slower reaction times.

The effects depend on the type of drug; the dose taken; the length of time in the user's body as well as the user themselves. Drivers who combine different medications, or combine medications with alcohol or drugs, may experience greater impairment.

Addressing the problem

Traditionally, it has been the driver's responsibility to decide whether they are fit to drive after taking a prescription drug or OTC medication. But fleet managers have a moral and legal responsibility to prevent their drivers from putting themselves and others at risk of death or serious injury.

Fleet managers must recognise the risks of driving after taking certain prescription and OTC medications, and:

- introduce an evidence-based 'health and wellbeing policy' to help employees remain on the road (safely and legally) when taking prescription medication;
- educate their drivers about the risks of driving when taking prescription and OTC medication using a range of different media channels (e.g. workshops);
- promote a culture of self-reporting, openly encouraging drivers to notify them as soon as they start taking OTC medication – this will allow fleet managers to provide support and guidance to the driver and, if necessary, make the decision to take the driver off the road;
- fit their fleet with in-vehicle data recorders (telematics) to assess how prescriptions are affecting a driver's performance and provide feedback;

- identify when drivers are more likely to be affected by prescription medications and how to provide appropriate support; and
- evaluate how shift patterns and the pressure of work can affect drivers using certain medications.

Fleet managers should also encourage employees to:

- read the information provided with their medication, particularly the side-effects and any warning messages about not driving or operating machinery;
- consult with their doctor or pharmacist about their fitness to drive and alternative medications where possible; and
- carry their prescription repeat form or other documents relating to their medication at all times.

AUTHOR

Andrew Drewary is an independent road risk manager and consultant collision analyst

Introducing a work-related road safety strategy to tackle drink- and drug-driving

by Gill Milner

An effective work-related road safety strategy – with policies that reflect the importance of zero-tolerance – is essential for any fleet manager seeking to tackle driver impairment.

Developing a driver impairment strategy

A good road safety strategy should establish clear standards of behaviour and a zero-tolerance policy for taking drink or drugs at the wheel while driving for work. It should also discourage drivers from driving with any substances in their systems at any time.

Risk management culture

An effective corporate risk management culture is intrinsic to any work-related road safety strategy.

Communication tools such as a driver handbook, videos and ebulletins can be used to inform employees of your organisation's commitment to a safe and sustainable working environment, and to highlight key safety priorities – including the need for drivers to stay safe and sober at the wheel.

This messaging can be strengthened by impairment policies designed to promote safe driving behaviours and discourage employees from taking life-threatening risks at the wheel.

Impairment policies

Organisations should have written policies for managing driver impairment.

These policies should:

- be read and understood by all employees;
- include rewards that encourage drivers to make the right decisions;
- include monitoring structures such as screening to assess the successes and failings of each policy;
- promote effective driver training and awareness-raising campaigns;
- offer a balanced approach towards driver impairment; and
- be based on clear evidence and best practice examples.

The internal regulations and processes supporting these policies should be clearly defined and carefully managed – supported by effective and, where possible, non-invasive testing procedures.

Drivers who choose to ignore these policies should be disciplined (following major or repeated minor infringements), or given feedback and asked to improve (following a minor infringement) and actions should be taken by the organisation to enable that improvement.

The benefits

By taking a proactive approach and choosing to embed road safety into every aspect of your operations, you can improve attitudes within your organisation and promote safer driving behaviours.

This proactive approach can:

- reduce your liability in the event of a drink- or drug-related road crash – you will be able to provide clear evidence that all action possible was taken to prevent or mitigate the crash; and
- protect your fleet's reputation in the aftermath of a road crash caused by driver impairment.

AUTHOR

Gill Milner is a technical account manager at Aviva.

Case study: The Brake Pledge: Sober by Tracy Fuller

Pledge training is fleet manager training about driver behavioural risks and how to manage them in the workplace.⁶

Make the  Brake **pledge**

Pledge training is designed for fleet managers, driver trainers and anyone with responsibility for at-work drivers. The programme covers:

- Six key areas of occupational road risk
- What employers should be doing to manage their risk
- How to educate and engage drivers with road safety messages

Training is based on six 'Pledge points' that are essential to fleet safety: SLOW, SOBER, SILENT, SECURE, SHARP, SUSTAINABLE.

SOBER

The SOBER Pledge encourages drivers and fleet managers to never drive after taking alcohol or drugs, or to take risks the morning after. Pledge training explains how to manage the risks associated with drink- and drug-driving, and provides a useful checklist for what a good driver impairment policy should include.



sober

The SOBER Pledge:

"I'll never drive after any alcohol or drugs and won't take any risks the morning after."

"I'll plan ahead to make sure my friends and I can get home safely."

"I'll never get a lift with drink or drug drivers, and I will speak out if someone's about to drive on drink or drugs."



How can fleet managers ensure their drivers are drug- and alcohol-free?

by Gareth Salisbury

When implementing a robust drink- and drug-driving policy it is vital that fleet managers regularly audit driver compliance and reward employees who choose to stay sober at the wheel.

In light of recent figures from UK police forces⁴ showing that they are catching two to three times as many drug drivers as drink drivers, directors and managers have to realise that drug problems may be present within their organisation.

Monitoring impairment

Any fleet pursuing a zero-tolerance policy to driver impairment must have procedures in place for testing drivers (and other employees) for alcohol and drugs. This can help:

- ensure drivers are fit to drive;
- identify repeat offenders;
- send a clear message of zero-tolerance for drink- and drug-driving;
- highlight weaknesses in an impairment policy or in the level of employee education; and
- reduce the number of all incidents, including morning-after incidents.

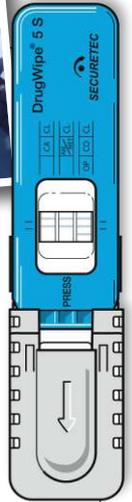
Fleet managers must enforce their impairment policy and take action if drivers test positive for drugs and/or alcohol while on the job. Failure to do so could result in drivers' viewing the policy as weak and ineffectual and encourage non-compliance.

You'll need to have robust procedures in place to collect, coordinate and evaluate your screening data – as this information can be used to help you understand your drivers and further develop your evidence-based policies as a result.

Drug testing procedures

When implementing a credible internally-run screening process for drugs and alcohol, it's important to use accurate, affordable and robust equipment that provides easy-to-read results.

Employee buy-in is vital to any road safety initiatives and this can only be achieved if drivers remain positive about the process. Don't introduce testing procedures that are perceived as 'invasive' by drivers and do explain to drivers why they are being tested and the risks posed to them, the organisation and other road users if they fail to comply with your driver impairment policy.



Screening technology

DrugWipe Dual⁷

The DrugWipe Dual is D.Tec's core screening device for public use. It is a simple-to-use, non-invasive device capable of screening for cannabis, cocaine, amphetamines, methamphetamines and opiates.

The DrugWipe kit provides the tester with two samplers, the first takes a small sample from the skin across the forehead; the second can be used to take a saliva sample. These samplers are then reinserted into the device for 10 seconds and will indicate if there are drugs present in the tester's system in just five minutes.

The device tests both skin and saliva because this gives a broadertimescale, as the presence of the raw drug in saliva often fades after a few hours, whereas the drug metabolite will be present on the skin for many hours and, for some drugs, up to a number of days after the drug is taken.

DrugWipe can be used to find drug users, not just those who have taken drugs in the few hours before a random test.

Alcohol testing⁸

D.Tec supplies a range of breathalysers which include UK Home Office approved devices for testing fleet drivers for alcohol in their system. When testing fleet drivers they have the option to initially carry out a passive, five second screening of each driver. If a driver fails the screening they will be taken aside to take a formal breathalyser test, by blowing into the tube of an calibrated breathalyser.

AUTHOR

Gareth Salisbury is UK sales manager for workplace testing at D.Tec International Ltd.

“In the UK, for example, many police forces are now arresting more drug drivers than drink drivers, and are reporting that a significant proportion of fatal crashes involve drug drivers.”

Conclusions and recommendations

Fleet managers can reduce the risks of drink- and drug-driving through:

- **POLICY** – clearly written policies for managing driver impairment
- **EDUCATION** – teaching employees why it is important not to drive while under the influence.
- **ZERO TOLERANCE** – a zero-tolerance policy for driving after drinking alcohol or taking drugs
- **TESTING** – procedures for testing drivers for alcohol and drugs
- **ENFORCEMENT** – enforce impairment policy and take action if drivers test positive for drugs and/or alcohol.

A good driver impairment policy will cover the following:

- Regular randomised drug and alcohol tests
- Procedures for testing for alcohol and/or drugs pre-employment; after involvement in a crash; if a driver is under suspicion of being influenced by drugs/alcohol
- Employees must report use of any medication (prescribed and non-prescribed) that could impair their ability to drive
- Employees must report to work fit to drive, without impairment from alcohol or drugs
- Disciplinary procedures for non-compliance
- Methods to enable open discussion about drugs and alcohol
- Education and training about the risk of driving after drinking alcohol or taking drugs

References

- 1 Wolff, K. et al, *Driving under the influence of drugs: Report from the expert panel on drug driving*, UK Government, 2013
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- 4 Police, fire and crime commissioner for Essex, *Police, fire and crime commissioner for Essex: Annual report 2018-2019, 2019*
- 5 Wolff, K. et al, *Driving under the influence of drugs: Report from the expert panel on drug driving*, UK Government, 2013
- 6 Brake, *Make the Brake Pledge, 2019*
- 7 D.Tec International, *Drug testing, 2020*
- 8 D.Tec International, *Breathalysers, 2020*

About D.Tec International Limited



D.Tec International Ltd are a specialist service provider of drug and alcohol testing services to safety critical industries and can manage the whole process in the UK and Ireland. D.Tec offer a very simple solution to what can be perceived as a complex problem.

From policy development to individually tailored awareness training courses, D.Tec have a range of testing solutions that your managers are trained by us to use. Our equipment is quick to use, clean, non-intrusive sample collection and importantly cost effective when compared to expensive, time consuming external companies being called to carry out testing.

In the UK, police are now drug testing over 70,000 drivers a year at the roadside with our DrugWipe screener and significantly more than 50% are positive. Many are driving company vehicles. Can you afford to lose a driver to a 12 month ban or worse still a Corporate Manslaughter case?

Police forces and governments around the world use DrugWipe. Contact your local distributor for further assistance.

www.dtecinternational.com

For more resources to help you manage the risks of drug- and drink-driving within your organisation, go to globalfleetchampions.org

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