



# TRAFFIC ALERT



Jody P. Weis, Superintendent of Police

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## Alcohol-Impaired Driving

Impaired driving is a chronic problem that will affect 1 in 3 Americans in their lifetime. Drivers are considered to be alcohol-impaired when their blood alcohol concentration (BAC) is .08 grams per deciliter (g/dl) or higher. Thus, any fatal crash involving a driver with a BAC of .08 or higher is considered to be an alcohol-impaired driving crash, and fatalities occurring in those crashes are considered to be alcohol-impaired driving fatalities.

In 2009, 10,839 people were killed in alcohol-impaired driving crashes. These alcohol-impaired driving fatalities accounted for 32 percent of the total motor vehicle traffic fatalities in the United States. The 10,839 fatalities in alcohol-impaired driving crashes during 2009 represent an average of one alcohol-impaired driving fatality every 48 minutes.

Traffic fatalities in alcohol-impaired driving crashes *decreased* by 7.4 percent from 11,711 in 2008, to 10,839 in 2009. The alcohol-impaired driving fatality rate per 100 million vehicle miles traveled (VMT) decreased to 0.36 in 2009 from 0.39 in 2008.

In 2009, a total of 1,314 children age 14 and younger were killed in motor vehicle traffic crashes. Of those 1,314 fatalities, 181 (14%) occurred in alcohol-impaired driving crashes. Out of those 181 deaths, more than half (92) were occupants of a vehicle with a driver who had a BAC level of .08 or higher, and another 27 children (15) age 14 and younger were pedestrians or pedalcyclists who were struck by drivers with a BAC of .08 or higher.

In fatal crashes in 2009, the highest percentage of drivers with a BAC level of .08 or higher was for drivers ages 21 to 24 (35%), followed by ages 25 to 34 (32%) and 35 to 44 (26%).

One of the most effective ways of stopping this problem is through law enforcement, and not just law enforcement, but high-visibility law enforcement. When the perceived risk of getting caught goes up, the likelihood that people will make the fatal decision to drink and drive decreases. This general deterrent effect can come only when enforcement is known about and feared.

***The Traffic Section would like to extend best wishes for a safe  
and  
joyous holiday season to all department members and their families.***