

New study may add ammunition to lowering BAC to .05

Written by Australian Business

September 28, 2013 /**24-7PressRelease**/ -- In May of this year, the National Transportation Safety Board recommended that all states lower the current .08 BAC threshold for [drunk driving](#) to .05 to help reduce accidents. The agency indicated that 500-800 lives would be saved per year in the U.S. if implemented.

The recommendation, however, wasn't exactly received with open arms. Many pushed back and cited several reasons why. Some indicated that it was difficult to get states to implement the present .08 BAC limit and unlikely that this new offer would be taken seriously.

However, advocates of the new threshold aren't giving up. One researcher from the University of Iowa is conducting driving experiments to offer additional proof that changing the limits to .05 will make an impact and save lives.

The study

Timothy Brown, Senior Research Associate of the National Advanced Driving Simulator located in Iowa, conducted the study. Various "test" drivers participated and were asked to drink various amounts of vodka--151-proof to be exact--and then get behind the wheel of a car mounted inside a metal pod. The subjects were asked to complete various driving tests via a driving simulator to observe the affects of what was consumed.

According to Brown, the main reason for these tests is to understand the driving capabilities of individuals in different alcohol impairment categories--those who are sober, those who consumed only a few drinks, and those who have had a lot more to drink.

Brown is unsure whether his data will provide concrete evidence that driving above a .05 BAC threshold as advocated by the NTSB is considered impaired. He admitted that driving with a .05 BAC likely leads to diminished performance, but indicated that the data from the study is the only way to tell.

Conflicting arguments

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It remains to be seen whether his results will provide ammunition for the push to lower the limit as many experts remain inconsistent on ways to reduce auto accidents on America's roadways.

Some indicate that the focus should be on distracted driving behaviors--as [auto accidents](#) have increased substantially in the wake of prevalent mobile device usage. According to a University of Utah study conducted in 2003, cellphone usage behind the wheel of a car lends the same impairment level as operating a vehicle under the influence.

Others argue that mandatory nationwide ignition interlock devices--particularly for repeat offenders--are the key to reducing vehicle accidents.

According to the Chicago Tribune, preliminary conclusions on the results of the driving simulation test are expected to be released this month.

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