

## **THERE ARE NO QUICK FIXES FOR ALCOHOL OR DRUG IMPAIRED DRIVERS**

(Burnaby, BC) – There is no quick fix if you drink or use drugs and then get behind the wheel of a vehicle. The only thing that reduces the effects of alcohol and drug impairment is time. This holiday season the BCAA Traffic Safety Foundation encourages everyone to take some time to think about the effects of impaired driving before you mix drinking or drugs with driving.

“I am pleased to see the federal government initiative to establish tougher legislation for impairment by drugs,” says Allan Lamb, executive director of the foundation. “It has been clear for years that a growing number of fatal crashes involve drivers who have been impaired by alcohol and drugs. Many police officers in BC have now been trained to detect drug impairment,” stated the foundations executive director and former police officer.

Driving is impaired when your ability to do so is affected by any substance or condition that changes your mood or perception of reality. Alcohol or drugs, illicit or prescription, and even fatigue and stress will impair your driving.

There is no quick fix for the damage you can cause if you drive while impaired. You could seriously injure or kill someone; lose your license or your car; spend time in jail; or pay stiff fines.

Every week in BC, impaired drivers kill on average 2 people and injure over 60 people. Surveys have shown that, compared to all provinces, British Columbians were the most against impaired driving yet one in five British Columbians admits to driving after drinking. The most recent Operation Impact impaired driving campaign reported 178 criminal drinking offences in BC between October 6 and 9, 2006 (source: RCMP media statement).

The BCAA TSF has a few suggestions to protect yourself and others if you are planning consume alcohol and, or drugs this holiday season.

**Plan Your Night Out** - With so many holiday parties to go to, plan your nights out and avoid driving after you've been drinking. Leave the car at home - public transit or taxis are safer options. If the party is at a friend's house, plan to spend the night and drive home the next day after the effects of the alcohol have worn off.

**Be a designated driver** – Take turns being the designated driver - when it's your turn, stick to beverages without alcohol. This doesn't mean you're left sipping ice water while everyone else enjoys a smart cocktail. Mocktails are delicious and refreshing cocktails – minus the alcohol – for all tastes and occasions. Recipes available at [http://www.bcaatsf.ca/protect\\_your\\_loved\\_ones](http://www.bcaatsf.ca/protect_your_loved_ones).

**Transportation Alternatives** - If you've already had a few too many, consider letting someone else drive you home. There are many ride alternatives available including taxis, calling a friend or family member, as well as free volunteer "safe ride home" services like Operation Red Nose. Or call a tow truck to take you and your car home. And the public transit NightBus service operates 7 nights a week until 4:00 a.m. Why take the risk, when someone else will drive you home safely.

**Be a Good Host** - Make sure your friends live to remember the good cheer. Have a variety of alcohol-free beverages like pop, juice, coffee, tea or even trendy mocktails on hand. Make sure some of the guests have agreed to be designated drivers and will not consume any alcohol. If you are concerned that any of your guests are impaired, call a taxi or offer the spare bed or the couch. A disagreement over safety with a friend is better than risking the alternative.

**Role Modelling** – Parents, remember your kids watch and learn from you. Like it or not, you have a profound influence on them and it's important that you demonstrate safe and healthy driving behaviours at all times. Don't drink and drive.

**Family Contracts – Call Home Anytime** - Young people like Christmas parties too. Often they don't want to admit that they or their friends drink or use drugs if it means their parents will be angry. To them it's worth the risk to drive or ride with a driver who is impaired. A "family contract" agrees that the kids can call at any hour for a safe ride home.

**Drug Impairment** – Whether it's medications or illegal drugs such as marijuana, be aware of anyone who is impaired by something other than alcohol. The cocktail of alcohol and drugs can be lethal for all road users.

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**The BCAA Traffic Safety Foundation** is a non-profit registered charity working with families, communities and business partners to reduce the number and severity of traffic crashes and injuries in B.C. For more information visit [www.bcaatsf.ca](http://www.bcaatsf.ca).

***DRIVE TO SAVE LIVES***

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