

SECTION VI – DANGEROUS DRIVING BEHAVIORS

A. Alcohol, Drugs and Driving

Drunk driving is a very serious threat to highway safety. Blood alcohol concentration (BAC) is a measurement of the amount of alcohol in a person's blood. Drivers are considered to be driving under the influence of alcohol, in Maryland, when their blood alcohol concentration is .08 or higher. Any amount of alcohol can affect one's judgment and physical coordination and can lead to criminal charges.

If you plan on drinking, plan not to drive.

Even though Maryland's limit for drunk driving is .08, a driver's ability to safely operate a vehicle may be impaired at a much lower BAC and may result in criminal charges. For example, an individual's vision, ability to perform simple motor functions and reaction time may be affected with just one drink and can increase the risk of a collision.

The number of drinks consumed is a poor measure of BAC because of the many factors affecting your body's ability to digest alcohol, such as weight, body fat, and how long ago and how much you ate. Factors like tiredness, your mood and taking certain medications can also make a difference in how alcohol affects your driving ability. It is very difficult to assess your own BAC or impairment.

1. Under 21 – Alcohol Restriction

If you are not yet 21 years of age, it is not legal for you to be drinking at all. If you are pulled over and you have been drinking, your license will be suspended or revoked. In addition, you could be charged with violating the alcohol restriction on your license.

A suspension or revocation for a violation of an Under 21 Alcohol Restriction or any violation of §21-902 of the Maryland Vehicle Law, (driving under the influence or impaired by alcohol) can result in mandatory participation in the Ignition Interlock Program. Please visit the MVA's website for additional information regarding the Ignition Interlock Program.

2. Controlled Dangerous Substances (CDS) – Illegal and Prescription Drugs

Illegal drugs, (marijuana, heroin, etc.), prescription medications (i.e. codeine), and chemical inhalants can severely impact a person's ability to safely operate a motor vehicle. Drugs have serious harmful effects on the skills required to drive safely: alertness, concentration, coordination, and reaction time. All drugs can make it difficult to judge distances and react to signals and sounds on the road.

Using prescription drugs can also impair your ability to drive. It is important to pay close attention to both prescription and over the counter drug label warnings, which instruct individuals to avoid using certain drugs when operating a motor vehicle or heavy machinery. Disregarding this recommendation can lead to criminal penalties should your ability to safely operate a vehicle be impaired.

3. Open Alcohol Container

It is against the law to operate a motor vehicle with an open alcohol container in the passenger area of the vehicle. An open container is any open can, bottle, container or package. For example, a six-pack of alcohol with an open or missing bottle/can or any empty bottles/