Drunk driving is no accident.

Drunk driving is no accident.

There were 16,694 alcohol-related fatalities in 2004 – 39 percent of the total traffic fatalities for the year.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), "A motor vehicle crash is considered to be alcohol-related if at least one driver or non-occupant (such as a pedestrian or pedalcyclist) involved in the crash is determined to have had a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of .01 gram per deciliter (g/dL) or higher. Thus, any fatality that occurs in an alcohol-related crash is considered an alcohol-related fatality. The term "alcohol-related" does not indicate that a crash or fatality was caused by the presence of alcohol."

Note the last paragraph, and in particular, the last sentence. This would seem to make the statistics below a little misleading since we tend to think that alcohol-related crashes are caused by drunk drivers. But if a sober driver kills an alcohol-impaired pedestrian, it's still considered an alcohol-related crash. Does this invalidate the drunk driving statistics below? No. The statistics reveal that most fatal alcohol-related crashes do indeed involve drunk drivers and far fewer (12%) of these fatalities involve intoxicated pedestrians or "pedalcyclists".

Of the 16,694 people who died in alcohol-related crashes in 2004, 8256 (57%) were killed in crashes where the driver had a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of .08 g/dL or higher. The legal limit for BAC is currently .08 in all states in the US.

Traffic fatalities in alcohol-related crashes fell by 2.4 percent, from 17,105 in 2003 to 16,694 in 2004. Although this is definitely an improvement, it is still a lot of dead fellow citizens. To put this in perspective, it is equivalent to a fully loaded Boeing 747 crashing, and leaving no survivors, every nine days all year long – over 39 airplanes in total.

The 16,694 fatalities in alcohol-related crashes during 2004 represent an average of one alcohol-related fatality every 31 minutes.

NHTSA estimates that alcohol was involved in 39 percent of fatal crashes and in 7 percent of all crashes in 2004.

In 2004, 21 percent of the children age 14 and younger who were killed in motor vehicle crashes were killed in alcohol-related crashes.

An estimated 248,000 people were injured in crashes where police reported that alcohol was present — an average of one person injured approximately every 2 minutes.

The rate of alcohol involvement in fatal crashes is more than 3 times higher at night than during the day (60% vs. 18%).

The highest percentage of drivers in fatal crashes who had BAC levels of .08 or higher was for males and drivers ages 21 to 24.

The percentages of drivers with BAC levels of .08 or higher in fatal crashes in 2004 were 27% for motorcycle operators, 22% for passenger cars, and 21% for light trucks. The percentage of drivers with BAC levels .08 or higher in fatal crashes was the lowest for large trucks (1%).

In 2004, 85 percent (11,791) of the 13,952 drivers with BAC of .01 or higher who were involved in fatal crashes had BAC levels at or above .08, and 51 percent (7,084) had BAC levels at or above .16. The most frequently recorded BAC level among drinking drivers involved in fatal crashes was .18.

Alcohol Effects Over Time. Think you'll just sleep it off? Think again!

After a night of drinking, the effects of alcohol last longer than you might think. You and your friends have decided to have a few drinks after work to ease the tension. You've been drinking since 6:00 p.m. and it's now 1:00 a.m. So, by now you already have a good idea of the way alcohol affects your motor skills, but are you aware of the blood alcohol levels? After the designated driver has driven you home, you fall into bed at 2:00 a.m., intoxicated with an alcohol concentration of .190 (.08 is now legally intoxicated as determined by the federal government and most states including Oklahoma).

Since alcohol leaves the blood at .015 per hour, let's see the blood alcohol effects over the next ten hours...

Time
2:00 a.m.
You get into bed, the room is spinning.

Blood Alcohol Concentration .190

3:00 a.m.
Sleeping
Blood Alcohol Concentration .175

4:00 a.m.
You wake up with a pounding headache, find the bathroom and take aspirin.
Blood Alcohol Concentration .160

5:00 a.m.
Sleeping.
Blood Alcohol Concentration .145

6:00 a.m.
Alarm startles you awake. Reluctantly, you get up for work
Blood Alcohol Concentration .130

7:00 a.m.
You leave for work, wondering why the keys won't fit the lock.
Blood Alcohol Concentration .115

8:00 a.m.
You've miraculously made it to work, but you're still legally intoxicated!
Blood Alcohol Concentration .10

10:00 a.m.
You leave for an appointment and could still be arrested for "driving under the influence."
Blood Alcohol Concentration .07

12:00 p.m.
Still under the influence.
Blood Alcohol Concentration .04

*Blood Alcohol Concentration (Information is based on a 170lb. average man)