



Now is a good time to remind your drivers of the consequences of drinking during the Holiday season and what effect their actions can have on their CDL or operator's license and ultimately their employment with your company. Advise your drivers to use caution when indulging in alcoholic beverages and have a designated driver to not only protect their license and job but the motoring public.

The FMCSA regulations are specific that a CDL driver while operating any type of motor vehicle is convicted of being under the influence of alcohol, as described by state law, will be disqualified from operating a commercial motor vehicle for one year. A second conviction would disqualify the driver from operating a commercial motor vehicle for life.

The effects of alcohol on behavior (including driving behavior) vary with the individual and with the concentration of alcohol in the individual's blood. The level of alcohol achieved in the blood depends in large part (although not exclusively) upon the amount of alcohol consumed and the time period over which it was consumed. One rule of thumb states that in a 150-pound person, each drink adds 0.02% to blood alcohol concentration and each hour that passes removes 0.01% from it.

Generally speaking, alcohol is absorbed into the blood relatively quickly and metabolized more slowly. Therefore, the potential exists for alcohol concentrations to build steadily throughout a drinking session. The table below shows some general effects of varying levels of Blood Alcohol Content (BAC). As a Driver Supervisor, you must be aware of the signs and symptoms of alcohol use:

- Evidence of Presence of Alcohol: Bottles, cans, and other containers which alcohol-containing beverages may have been purchased and/or consumed in; bottle caps from alcohol containers; bottle or can openers; drivers drinking from paper bags; odor of alcohol on containers or on driver's breath.
- Physical Symptoms: Reduction of reflexes, slurred speech, loss of coordination, unsteady gait.
- Behavioral Symptoms: Increased talkativeness reduced emotional control, distorted judgment, impaired driving ability, gross effects on thinking and memory.



The table below shows some general effects of varying levels of BAC.

BAC Behavioral Effects:

- 0.02-0.09% Loss of muscular coordination, impaired senses, changes in mood and personality.
- 0.10-0.19% Marked mental impairment, further loss of coordination, prolonged reaction time.
- 0.20-0.29% Nausea, vomiting, double vision.
- 0.30-0.39% Hypothermia, blackouts, anesthesia.
- 0.40-0.70% Coma, respiratory failure, death.

WHAT ALCOHOL USE IS PROHIBITED?

Alcohol is a legal substance; therefore, the rules define specific prohibited alcohol-related conduct. Performance of safety-sensitive functions is prohibited:

- While using alcohol.
- While having a breath alcohol concentration of 0.04 percent or greater as indicated by an alcohol breath test.
- Within four hours after using alcohol.
- In addition, refusing to submit to an alcohol test or using alcohol within eight hours after an accident or until tested (for drivers required to be tested) are prohibited.

WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES OF ALCOHOL MISUSE?

Drivers who engage in prohibited alcohol conduct must be immediately removed from safety-sensitive functions. Drivers who have tested .04 percent or greater during an alcohol test cannot return to safety-sensitive duties until they have been evaluated by a substance abuse professional and complied with any treatment recommendations to assist them with an alcohol problem. To further safeguard transportation safety, drivers who have any alcohol concentration (defined as 0.02 percent or greater and less than 0.04 percent) when tested just before, during or just after performing safety-sensitive functions must also be removed from performing such duties for 24 hours. If a driver's behavior or appearance suggests alcohol misuse, a reasonable suspicion alcohol test must be conducted. If a breath test cannot be administered, the driver must be removed from performing safety-sensitive duties for at least 24 hours.

There will be no Idealease Safety Bulletin on Friday, 12/26, and Friday, 1/02. Look for the next Bulletin on Friday, January 9, 2009. Idealease wishes you a safe and joyous holiday season!