



SAFETY/SENSE

The Monthly Newsletter of Delaware **Safety** Council

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HAPPY
holidays





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Message from Executive Director, Stacey Inglis

Dear Members,

As the first state, Delawareans are accustomed to being first. We have Caesar Rodney to thank for that. What we are not comfortable with is being last, especially in something as important as driver safety.

In 2004, Delaware became the last state in the nation to adopt the .08 BAC standard. The move came under the threat of losing nearly \$2 million in federal highway money, and only after nearly a decade of failed attempts.

The Delaware Legislature tried and failed three times in seven years to enact a .08 law. In 2004, the average alcohol-related fatality in Delaware cost the public \$3.7 million in monetary and quality-of-life costs, according to federal records.

The first states to lower their blood alcohol limits to .08 were Oregon and Utah in 1983. A total of 33 states had .08 thresholds before the federal government's 1996 mandate. Idaho and Illinois were first to comply with the federal law.

Those opposed to toughening Delaware's law argued that the federal government was too intrusive by tying transportation dollars to state passage of a drunk driving bill.

As we are in the throws of the holiday season, blood alcohol levels and testing are topical. The Office of Highway Safety's [DUI booklet](#) goes into great detail regarding DUIs in Delaware.

Drive Safely,

Stacey





What is a Blood Alcohol Test?

A blood alcohol test measures the amount of alcohol in a sample of your blood. You will have alcohol in your blood if you've been drinking alcoholic beverages. Alcohol is also called ethanol. It's the main ingredient of alcoholic drinks, such as beer, wine, and distilled spirits (liquor). When you have an alcoholic drink, the alcohol is quickly absorbed into your bloodstream. Your liver breaks down the alcohol so your body can get rid of it.

If you drink faster than your liver can break down alcohol, the alcohol level in your blood will increase and you may start to feel intoxicated (drunk). Alcohol intoxication affects how your brain works. At first, you may feel more relaxed or talkative than usual. As alcohol levels increase, you may have some problems thinking clearly. You may have difficulty with your balance, slurred speech, slowed reaction time, and loss of judgement.

Continuing to drink after you are intoxicated can lead to an alcohol overdose. Symptoms include vomiting, trouble breathing, and passing out. An alcohol overdose can lead to coma or death.

There are a few blood tests that can measure whether a person has been drinking. A blood alcohol concentration (BAC) test is commonly used to see if a person has been drinking recently. It is also called a blood alcohol content test. This test can find alcohol in your blood for up to 12 hours after drinking. It can also show the amount of alcohol that you drank.

Other blood tests measure substances that may stay in your blood for weeks after you've had alcohol. These tests are typically used to test for alcohol use disorder (AUD) or to check whether a person recovering from AUD has stayed sober.





What do the results mean?

Blood alcohol level results may be given in different ways, including percentage of blood alcohol content (BAC). Typical results are below.

- **Sober:** 0.0 percent BAC
- **Legally intoxicated:** .08 percent BAC
- **Very impaired:** .08–0.40 percent BAC.

At this blood alcohol level, you may have difficulty walking and speaking.

Other symptoms may include confusion, nausea, and drowsiness.

- **At risk for serious complications:** Above .40 percent BAC. At this blood alcohol level, you may be at risk for coma or death.



The timing of this test can affect the accuracy of the results. A blood alcohol test is only accurate within 6–12 hours after your last drink. If you have questions or concerns about your results, you may want to talk to a health care provider and/or a lawyer.

What is it used for?

A blood alcohol test may be used for many purposes, including:

- **Legal evidence.** Alcohol testing may be part of:
- A check to see if you've been "driving while drunk." This means that your alcohol level is above the legal limit. To get quick results, police often ask you to breathe into a breathalyzer, a device that checks your breath for alcohol. But another option may be to go to a medical facility to get a blood test, which provides more accurate results than a breathalyzer.
- A check for under-age drinking
- An investigation into a criminal or motor vehicle accident investigation
- A court case or as part of a parole agreement
- **Employment.** Employers test for alcohol use before hiring you. After you're hired, they may test you to check for on-the-job drinking. If you have a work accident, you may be tested to see whether alcohol was involved.
- **Testing for alcohol poisoning.** Hospital emergency staff may use a blood alcohol test to check for this life-threatening condition that can happen if blood alcohol level gets very high after drinking large amounts of alcohol. Young children can also get alcohol poisoning from drinking household products that contain alcohol, such as mouthwash and certain cold medicines.
- **Monitoring treatment for alcohol use disorder.** Some programs may require testing to see if you have been able to avoid drinking.



History of Drunk Driving

As early as 1897, the first recorded drunk driving arrest was made. It was a man named George Smith who drove a taxi cab in London for a living. One night, Smith was drinking and driving and crashed into a building. After he was arrested for drunk driving, he eventually plead guilty to the charge. He was sentenced to pay 25 shillings.

In America, just a few years after the drunk driving arrest in London, New York became the first state to create drunk driving laws. Unlike today, these early 20th century drunk driving laws did not have a set limit in terms of a person's blood alcohol content.

Among the first proponents of drunk driving control were William Haddon, Jr. of the New York State Department of Health and then-future U.S. Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, who was working for New York Gov. W. Averell Harriman. Haddon conducted research in Westchester County, New York City and elsewhere that revealed that as many as one-half of America's 25,000 annual automobile-related deaths were alcohol-related, much higher than previously believed. Moynihan helped by writing articles on what he termed a "disastrous epidemic" on America's highways.

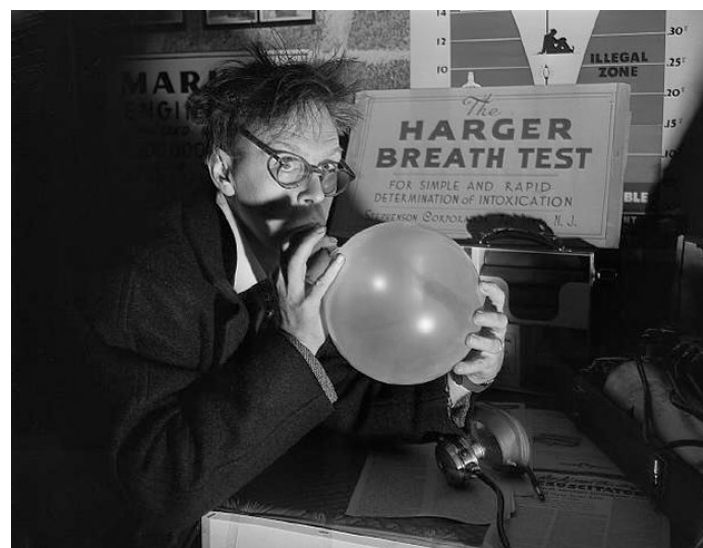
Connecticut Sen. Abraham A. Ribicoff held hearings on drunk driving in 1965, helping to spur the creation of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). In 1978, Doris Aiken, a journalist in Schenectady, N. Y., energized members of the public when she founded Remove Intoxicated Drivers (RID), after reading of the deaths of two local teenagers in a drunk driving crash. Two years later, Candy Lightner, a realtor from California, started Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) after her 13-year-old daughter, Cari, was killed by a drunk driver who had several previous DWI arrests. In 1984, the joint

efforts of government officials, RID and MADD led to Congress passing a bill, sponsored by New Jersey legislators Frank Lautenberg and James J. Howard, that raised the drinking age from 18 to 21. This law continues to save 500-1,000 lives annually, according to the NHTSA.

A Turning Point for Drunk Driving

The results of this new activism around drunk driving were dramatic. By 1990, the yearly death rate from drunk driving had fallen by 40 percent, from 25,000 to 17,000. States passed much stricter laws, including lowering the legal blood alcohol level from 0.15 percent to 0.08 percent. The idea of the designated driver (someone who'd commit to being sober and ensuring everyone else's safety) was a concept imported from Scandinavia with great success and much fanfare. Phrases such as "Friends Don't Let Friends Drive Drunk" became part of high school health classes and the national vocabulary. Whereas few people believed that drunk driving would ever disappear in full, there was considerable optimism that it could become rare, as it has in Scandinavia, Australia, Germany and other countries.

Unfortunately, drunk driving has not disappeared.



Holiday Train Travel Tips



This holiday season, it's easy to **have a stress-free train trip** following these 10 tips!

1. Set a Meeting Place

Meet at a place away from the gate area so you can avoid the crowds near the platforms.

2. Bring Your Gifts

You can travel with up to 150 lbs. of luggage for free! AMTRAK allows two 50-lbs. bags, so pack one with clothes and toiletries and the other with presents for friends and family. Please see an Amtrak agent or a [Red Caps](#) to help you check your additional bags. While you're at it, see what else you can [bring for free](#).

3. Bring a Charger

Each coach seat has its own outlet, so be sure to bring your charger. You're going to

be snapping lots of pics (tagging them [#Amtrak](#)) and taking advantage of our [free Wi-Fi](#) (on select routes). This is no time for a dead battery.

4. Bring Your ID

Make sure to carry a valid photo ID at all times since the conductor may ask for it when you're onboard your train. All your bags also need ID tags. You can pick up free luggage tags at the station.

5. Arrive at least 30 Minutes Early

Stations are their busiest around the holidays. So make sure to build in extra time when you head to the station. Also, watch the monitors for your platform or gate number. Once it's announced, you can head that direction to await your train's arrival.

6. Download the Amtrak App

It's free for I-Phone and Android phones. That means you can plan and book your holiday travel throughout Amtrak's nationwide system of trains and buses straight from your phone. You can also check the arrival and departure status of trains and display your eTicket from right in the app.

7. Watch the Weather

Our service isn't affected by weather as much as our friends at the airport, but it

can slow your travel plans. Make sure to keep an eye on the forecast and to check your train status.

8. Earn points

Have you signed up for [Amtrak Guest Rewards](#) yet? Earn points toward free travel (and lots more) when you ride.

9. Be Safe

Always be aware of your surroundings when you travel. Stand back from the edge of the platform, do not leave your bags unattended, and watch your step when boarding and leaving the train or when walking between cars while the train is in motion.

10. Board Early

Parents traveling with young kids and passengers needing assistance receive priority boarding. Simply speak to an Amtrak staff member for assistance. Parents, you can even bring a number of [items onto the train for free](#).



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Delaware



Holiday Light Safety Tips

Spending time with family is the most important part of the holidays, and making our homes inviting and cheerful with holiday lights, great-smelling candles and festive decorations is often a treasured household tradition. In the hustle and bustle of holiday entertaining, it can be easy to get so distracted with family activities that we forget how hazardous some of our decorations can be if we don't exercise proper precautions.

Follow these 10 holiday light safety tips to ensure that your holiday décor is merry, bright and, most importantly of all, safe for the family and friends you cherish.

1. Never leave your lights on unattended

Whether you're dashing out for a carton of eggnog or going to sleep for the night, turn your Christmas lights off any time you will not be nearby to monitor. While this may seem like a pain, there are a variety of products that make it easy, like Christmas light timers and remote controls that turn your indoor and outdoor lights off with the touch of a button. If

you're prone to forgetting, try an automated timer for outdoor lighting that illuminates your decorations when it gets dark outside and turns them off at sunrise.

2. Consider using LED lights instead of incandescent lights

LED lights, while a bit more expensive, are a much safer option for indoor and outdoor lighting. Because they produce very little heat, they are perfect for holiday decorations. They also last up to 25 times longer and use 75 percent less electricity.

3. Be mindful of where you place candles

There's nothing like warm candlelight flickering away on a cozy holiday night. However, candles aren't the safest option — especially if you have kids or pets who are prone to accidentally knocking things over. Place lit candles above the reach of wandering hands and tails, and well out of the way of flammable materials like curtains or wrapping paper. To prevent possible burns and fires, try flameless candles.

4. Indoor and outdoor lights are not interchangeable

Though indoor lights can be cheaper, don't use them as a substitute for outdoor lights. Indoor lights aren't as sealed against moisture as their outdoor counterparts, making them unsafe for wet winter weather. If you're not sure which type of lights you have, play it safe and check the label or toss them and buy new ones.

5. Only use three light strands per outlet

The number of light strings you can connect together in sequence depends on both the strands' wattage and the maximum watt capacity of the house circuit you plug them into. You may need to do a bit of math to figure out what's safe. If you're worried about calculating that number incorrectly, a good rule of thumb is to keep each outlet to three strands of lights or fewer. Also consider using a power strip with a built-in circuit breaker instead of your wall outlet for added protection.



6. Get rid of old lights

It's nice to pass down holiday heirlooms, but old light strands from years past can be very dangerous. Modern lights are much safer, as they have fused plugs to prevent sparks in the event of a short circuit.

7. Securely fasten all outdoor light strings

Winter storms can easily catch and blow loose outdoor Christmas light strands, causing potential electrical hazards. Fasten your lighted decorations to firm objects like trees or walls to keep your lights secure and where they belong. Also fasten indoor lights out of reach of pets and small children to avoid chewing mishaps that could result in accidental electrocution.

8. Avoid using electric lights on metallic trees

Shiny aluminum and tinsel Christmas trees can bring real sparkle to your holiday décor, but if you opt for a metallic tree, avoid using electric lights or decorations. The tree could easily become charged with electricity, giving a real "shock" to anyone who touches it.

9. Be smart when using extension cords

Outdoor lights can pose a safety risk when extension cords are low enough to become surrounded by pools of rain or melted snow. Keep the cords dry, and make sure to use surge protectors to minimize damage in case of voltage fluctuation.

10. Keep your Christmas tree from becoming a fire hazard

Sadly, Christmas trees are the leading cause of house fires during the holidays. While there are definitely benefits to a real tree, artificial trees are the safer choice. Most artificial trees are made with fire-resistant materials, making them fairly safe to light and decorate. If you opt for a real tree, make sure it's fresh when you buy it and that you keep it well watered. Once your tree dries out, it is no longer safe to keep in your home and should be removed immediately.

Whether you go big or small with your Christmas decorations this season, protecting your home and family should be your number one priority. Follow these 10 Christmas light safety tips to have a happy, secure holiday.





Delaware Safety Council
for information regarding
CPR/AED Certification classes
call (302) 276-0660.

Prevent a Heart Attack While Shoveling Snow

Don't shovel first thing in the morning. Most heart attacks occur first thing in the morning, when your blood is most likely to clot. Give yourself time to get up and moving before going out and grabbing the shovel. You'll also give the sun a chance to warm up things a bit.

Watch for warning signs. Tightness in the chest, lightheadedness and dizziness are all signs of a heart attack. If you suspect you're having a heart attack, call 911.