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December 13, 2017

Please visit NABCA's new website at [www.nabca.org](http://www.nabca.org)

**SAVE THE DATE**

**MARCH 18-20, 2018**

**25<sup>th</sup> Annual Symposium on Alcohol Beverage Law & Regulation** at the Crystal Gateway Marriott in Arlington, VA.

Join government, legal and industry professionals for a symposium that offers the chance to hear the latest on legal issues related to alcohol beverages. Session topics currently planned include *Here Comes the Judge*, *The Lens of Time: 1st versus 25th NABCA Legal Symposium*, *Trade Practices: A Civil Matter?* plus many others. Watch for registration materials in the coming months! Continuing Legal Education (CLE) credit is available for many states. For more information, go to [www.nabca.org](http://www.nabca.org).

**APRIL 11-13, 2018**

**Alcohol Policy 18: *Evidence To Action-Building an Evidence-Based Social Movement***

Renaissance Arlington Capital View Hotel, Arlington, Virginia. For additional information on hotel, important dates and more, please visit the AP18 Conference website.

**AP18 Registration Now Open!**

**APRIL 30–MAY 1, 2018**

**2018 RRForum National Conference** - hosted by the Michigan Liquor Control Commission and will be held in Detroit.

**NEW!**

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**81st Annual Conference** will be held at the Arizona Biltmore, Phoenix, AZ.

**Theme: Bridging Divides;** For more information, visit [www.nabca.com](http://www.nabca.com) website.

**JULY 18-20, 2018**

**8<sup>th</sup> Biennial Northwest Alcohol & Substance Abuse Conference**

Riverside Hotel, Boise Idaho

The Pre-Conference Sessions are on Wednesday. The official conference kicks off Thursday morning. Visit [NorthwestAlcoholConference.org](http://NorthwestAlcoholConference.org) for more information.

**NABCA HIGHLIGHTS**

**Native American Nations & State Alcohol Policies: An Analysis**

**Sunday Alcohol Sales** (July 2017)

**Alcohol Technology in the World of Tomorrow - (White Paper)**

**The Control State Agency Info Sheets.** Please view website for more information.

**NABCA Survey Database** – now available for members on the website.

[www.NABCA.org](http://www.NABCA.org)



## CONTROL STATE NEWS

### OH: "Regulate Marijuana Like Alcohol" measure suggested for Ohio ballot

21 WFMJ

By Lauren Stebelton, Multi Media Producer

December 12, 2017

COLUMBUS, Ohio - An applicant for a medical marijuana grower's license has announced plans for a 2018 Ohio ballot issue to legalize the sale and possession of marijuana.

The measure would allow any adult 21 years and older to grow their own weed for personal use.

It's a measure that may raise some eyebrows around the state, but it certainly has its backers.

This week, CEO of CannAscend Jimmy Gould announced that he'd be getting the signatures needed to put a measure back on the ballot, which would make growing, processing, possessing, selling and using marijuana legally.

Gould says the "Regulate Marijuana Like Alcohol" amendment will be on the ballot next fall.

"This will be on the ballot. We will get the signatures and we will spend whatever is necessary to spend to get this on the ballot," said Gould. "We want everybody's opinion, anybody who thinks that we should send it in."

"I think we have a chance here," said issue supporter Jake Cabrera. "Make sure it's something all Ohioans can accept."

Gould said the measure would allow cultivation, processing, and dispensing of marijuana by anyone 21 years or older.

The smoking of marijuana would be prohibited and on public transportation.

Gould said it would keep the existing medical marijuana program in place.

Gould has criticized the state Department of Commerce for hiring a consultant with a drug conviction to help select Ohio's medical marijuana growers.

His company was one of the companies who applied to be a cultivator and distributor of medical marijuana but was rejected.

Gould said at news conference the selection system was flawed by incompetence and favoritism.

The Commerce department has had some political pressure to answer questions and perhaps restart the selection process over; they have refused to acquiesce on either.

### Montgomery Co, MD: Over 100 Arrests Made By Holiday DUI Patrols In Montgomery County

*Over 100 drunk drivers have been arrested in the first month of Montgomery County Police's Holiday Alcohol Task Force.*

Rockville Patch

By Cameron Luttrell, Patch Staff

December 12, 2017

ROCKVILLE, MD — More than 100 drunk-driving arrests were made by police across Montgomery County in the first month of its annual holiday task force. Efforts to prevent drunk drivers during the 2017 holiday season will include sobriety checkpoints, ticketing the hosts of underage drinking parties, and checks to ensure businesses don't sell alcohol to underage buyers.

The Montgomery County Police Alcohol Holiday Task Force began its work Nov. 15 with a sobriety checkpoint and will continue through Jan. 7. In the first three weeks of the task force, 112 drivers were arrested for DUI. Other results include:

Week 1: November 16-18:

- 19 – Arrests for driving under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs (DUI)
- 2 – Civil alcohol citations issued to adults for possession of alcohol under the age of 21

Week 2: November 21-22 and November 24-25:

- 43 – Arrests for driving under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs (DUI)
- 4 – Civil alcohol citations issued to adults for possession of alcohol under the age of 21

- 3 – Criminal arrests. Task force officers arrested a man after he was stopped while driving a vehicle that had been previously reported stolen during a residential burglary in the Gaithersburg area.

Week 3: November 29 to December 2:

- 24 – Arrests for driving under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs (DUI)

Week 4: December 6 to December 9:

- 26 – Arrests for driving under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs (DUI)

In 2015, Montgomery County Police Officer Noah Leotta was killed when he was hit by a repeat drunk driver while working on the alcohol task force. As a result, state law now requires ignition interlocks to all drunken driving offenders in Maryland.

And Alex and Calvin's Law, as it is known, was enacted after two Thomas Wootton High School graduates died in a crash following an underage party in June 2015. Adults who host parties where alcohol is served to minors can now face jail time and a \$5,000 fine.

Areas of focus include:

- Enforcement of traffic laws in areas known for a high number of alcohol-related tragedies with the goal of getting drunk or drug-impaired drivers off the road.
- Compliance checks of businesses that hold alcohol licenses by using underage volunteers to attempt to purchase alcohol at establishments (ensuring that shopkeepers are careful not to sell alcohol to minors).
- Responding to calls for underage drinking parties. All attendees are screened for alcohol usage, and those who are under age 21 are issued citations. Every person is then ensured a safe ride home. Parents of juveniles are notified to come and get them. Any parent or other adult who hosts can be held liable and can be issued a citation. An adult can be held criminally liable if he/she provides alcohol to an individual under 21 years and he/she knew or reasonably should have known the individual would operate a motor vehicle and did operate the vehicle under the influence of alcohol and caused serious injury or death (Alex and Calvin's Law).
- Sobriety checkpoints: The location of the checkpoints is based on collision and traffic data focusing on areas that drivers are most at risk for encountering impaired drivers.
- Responding to calls for service regarding intoxicated persons.

Residents can help police combat alcohol-related crime and collisions this holiday season:

If you plan on drinking alcohol, include a sober driver in your plans:

- If you will be drinking, do not plan on driving. Plan ahead; designate a sober driver before the party begins.
- When you know you'll be drinking, leave your keys at home or give them to someone else.
- If you have been drinking, do not drive—even a short distance. Call a taxi, Uber, phone a sober friend or family member, use public transportation or call Washington Regional Alcohol Program's SoberRide at 1-800-200-TAXI (information regarding specific dates of this year's program has yet to be announced).

If you believe you are observing a driver impaired by alcohol or drugs:

- Call 911. If possible, and without putting yourself in danger, obtain the license plate of the vehicle, the direction of travel of the vehicle, and a description of the vehicle (make, model, color).

If you have information on establishments that are selling alcohol to people younger than 21 or bars that are over-serving patrons:

- If it is occurring at the present time, you can call the police non-emergency number at 301-279-8000.
- If you believe it is an ongoing issue, you can call Crime Solvers toll-free at 1-866-411-TIPS (8477) or leave a Crime Solvers tip here. You can remain anonymous. Please provide as much information as possible. Tips will be forwarded to the Alcohol Initiatives Section.
- You can also call the Keeping it SAFE: Under Twenty-One Alcohol Prevention Coalition at 301-670-7233 to report an ongoing issue of an establishment selling alcohol to minors. Tips will be forwarded to the Alcohol Initiatives Section.

If you have information on an underage drinking party:

- If it is occurring at the present time, you can call the police non-emergency number at 301-279-8000.

- If you have knowledge of a party planned for a future date, you can call the Keeping it SAFE: Under Twenty-One Alcohol Prevention Coalition at 301-670-7233. You can leave a message and remain anonymous. You can also call Crime Solvers toll-free at 1-866-411-TIPS (8477). Provide as much information as possible. Tips will be forwarded to the Alcohol Initiatives Section.

The Montgomery County Police Alcohol Holiday Task Force includes officers from the Alcohol Initiatives Section and patrol officers from the six police districts, as well as officers from the Gaithersburg City Police Department, the Maryland National Capital Park Police Department (Montgomery County Division), Maryland State Police, the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office, and the Takoma Park Police Department.

The Montgomery County Department of Liquor Control will also assist with compliance checks of businesses who hold alcohol licenses.

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## VT: Vermont DLC Launches Operation SafeRide in Collaboration with Uber

### News Release

Vermont Department of Liquor Control  
December 12, 2017

MONTPELIER, VT – December 12, 2017 - The Vermont Department of Liquor Control (DLC), and Uber today announced a joint effort to raise awareness about the dangers associated with alcohol-impaired driving this holiday season. The groups are launching Operation SafeRide, which tackles the shared goal of reducing the prevalence of impaired driving in Vermont.

“The DLC is interested in innovating our approach when it comes to responsible drinking in our licensed establishments”, said Chief Skyler Genest of The Vermont DLC. “Through grant funding provided by NABCA, we are excited to engage with the public this holiday season, and through a collaboration with Uber we are focusing our efforts on reducing impaired driving. One death is too many, and 2017 has seen a notable increase in fatal motor vehicle crashes on our roadways. Let’s all work together to get home safely.”

General Manager of Uber New England, Tom Maguire, adds “There is never an excuse to get behind the wheel after drinking this holiday season - or any day of the year. Uber is proud to team up on Operation SafeRide to encourage Vermont residents to celebrate safely. Plan ahead and coordinate how you and your loved ones will get to and from the night’s festivities.”

Analysis of historical data in Vermont has shown an increase of DUI arrests in the greater Burlington area during the months of December and January. The DLC will be deploying Liquor Investigators in and around bars and restaurants during the holiday season. Those investigators want to engage with patrons and educate them about responsible drinking. The DLC wants patrons to recognize how much is too much to drink. Additionally, the DLC, in partnership with Uber, will be offering patrons \$10 Uber gift cards, which can be used as a safe ride option in the future.

The DLC appreciates your support of this program as we all work to reduce impaired driving on Vermont’s roadways.

### About the Vermont Department of Liquor Control (DLC)

The mission of the Vermont Department of Liquor Control is to serve the public by encouraging responsible consumption and preventing the misuse of beverage alcohol and tobacco through the controlled distribution, education and licensing of sellers, as well as the wise use of enforcement. The Department works to provide excellent customer service in conjunction with our Agency Partners to operate efficient, convenient, and profitable liquor stores. All profits from the Department’s operations are contributed to the State of Vermont’s General Fund with over \$300,000,000 being contributed since 2000.

### About Uber

Uber’s mission is to bring reliable transportation to everywhere, for everyone. We started in 2010 to solve a simple problem: how do you get a ride at the touch of a button? Six years and more than two billion trips later, we’ve started tackling an even greater challenge: reducing congestion and pollution in our cities by getting more people into fewer cars.

Theresa Barrows, Director of Marketing

Vermont Department of Liquor Control | 13 Green Mountain Dr. | Montpelier, VT 05602 | O: 802-828-4932 | C: 802-461-6462  
| Theresa.Barrows@Vermont.Gov

### CONTACT INFO:

Skyler Genest, Director of Enforcement and Compliance 802-477-2429 Skyler.Genest@vermont.gov

## LICENSE STATE NEWS

### NY: Number of craft alcohol producers surges in New York

The Seattle Times  
By The Associated Press  
December 11, 2017

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — Consumer demand for locally made, handcrafted beer, wine, cider and liquor has caused the number of New York alcohol manufacturers to surge in recent years.

Democratic Gov. Andrew Cuomo on Tuesday reported that the number of craft alcohol producers has grown by 340, or 50 percent, since 2014, when a new series of incentives for the industry was enacted.

The state is now the No. 4 producer of craft beer and wine in the nation, No. 2 for craft distillers and the country's leading maker of craft hard cider.

The governor says the growth shows the state's attempts to help the industry by reforming outdated liquor laws, cutting red tape and keeping fees and taxes low are paying off.

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS

### Canada: Wasted lives: The impact of policy on alcohol consumption and addiction

*'Because we like alcohol so much, we prefer to look the other way,' says alcohol researcher*

CBC News  
By Clare Hennig  
December 12, 2017

Alcohol sales bring in more money to the provincial government than natural gas royalties, forestry revenue or tobacco taxes, but some experts argue the social and healthcare costs outweigh the profits.

In the past, the previous B.C. Liberal provincial government made efforts to increase the availability of alcohol by introducing 70 recommendations to modernize the province's liquor laws.

Those efforts included allowing wine and beer sales in grocery stores, allowing businesses like barbershops and hair salons to apply for liquor licences and allowing round-the-clock room service for booze at hotels.

"There was definitely an emphasis on increasing the sales of alcohol," said Attorney General David Eby.

He said while there are no plans to roll back initiatives that were successful or popular with the public, the current government is making harm reduction and addiction a priority.

"We are certainly not ignoring that as a government," Eby said.

Possible initiatives include more detox support for people battling addiction, adding labels to containers about the alcohol content, and educational initiatives at college campuses about the dangers of binge drinking.

"These are all pieces that our government is considering," he said. "We're six months in and I agree 100 per cent that we need to improve our public health response around alcohol."

Revenue versus cost

A recent B.C. budget noted that liquor revenue is projected to average more than \$1 billion per year over the next three years, although there are no estimates of specifically how much alcohol addiction costs B.C.

Tim Stockwell, director of the Canadian Institute for Substance Use Research and a psychology professor at the University of Victoria, said the societal costs of alcohol addiction can be measured by lost productivity, increased healthcare, policing and criminal justice.

The 2002 figures for Canada estimate alcohol-related costs at more than \$14 billion per year.

That figure is much higher today, Stockwell said.

"The government, I'm sure, is losing more money overall," he said.

The solution, Stockwell argues, is not trying to collect more revenue through increased sales but rather limiting consumption of alcohol to reduce harm.

He'd like to see the province require retailers to standardize the prices of alcohol, so that all units-per-beverage are priced equally. Right now, some beverages that have a high alcohol content are cheaper than those with lower alcohol content.

Under minimum pricing, the price of hard liquor would reflect its percentage of alcohol.

"We do studies with people who have severe alcohol dependence," he said. "They actually reported a reduction in harms from alcohol after the minimum pricing."

Stockwell said public demand will influence policies but he hopes awareness about alcohol abuse and addiction will help diminish the cost to society.

"We are in a little bit of denial about this," he said. "By and large, because we like alcohol so much, we prefer to look the other way."

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## Africa: FDA bans advertisement of alcohol in the media effective 2018

GhanaWeb

Source: [kasapafmonline.com](http://kasapafmonline.com)

December 13, 2017

The Food and Drugs Authority (FDA) effective 1st January 2018, has banned both advertisement and Live Presenter Mention(LPM)of alcoholic beverages in the media before 8pm.

This directive, the FDA says is to protect children and prevent them from being lured into alcoholism at their young age.

Alcohol advertisement has become very rampant over the last few years and has flooded the media both radio and television, a development which has become cause for concern for a section of the public.

The Food and Drugs Authority (FDA) in 2015, placed a ban on celebrities from advertising alcoholic beverages is an adherence to a World Health Organization (WHO) policy.

Speaking to Kasapa News on their latest directive, the Public Relations Officer of the Food and Drugs Authority, James Lartey said the future of Ghanaian children must not be put at the expense of the media houses making money.

"Children should not be influenced, I understand that most of the radio and TV stations get their sponsored programme from some of the these alcoholic beverage companies. But we should also understand that we shouldn't also look at the money media station get against the future and health of our populace, this is very important."

Asked if the age limit advertised on the alcoholic beverages is not enough to stop children from consuming alcohol, Mr Lartey said, "Look at advertisement in general printed advertisement is not that effective like hearing and seeing advertisement, let's admit that so if it comes to airing of TV and radio advertisement when people are hearing and seeing the effect is very strong, so we can't compare that to labeling issues.

We all know that there are expiry date on product, but we most of the time buy and use them before we may even check their expiry dates. Sight and hearing is very critical in advertising."

He added that media houses who flout the law will be dealt with according to the law.

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## Asia: Three cheers for Vietnamese privatization

*The government is floating significant stakes in select state-owned enterprises, including profitable brewers, in a long promised divestment drive*

Asia Times

By Peter Janssen,

December 13, 2017

HO CHI MINH CITY - In December 18, Vietnam will kick off an auction for a 53.6% stake in Saigon Alcohol and Beer Beverages Corporation (Sabeco), brewer of the popular Saigon Beer and 333 Beer brands which claim about half of the country's fast-growing beer market.



The deal promises to be the biggest divestment of a state-owned Vietnamese company to date, raising an estimated 110 trillion dong (US\$4.8 billion) while putting some much-needed fizz back in Vietnam's laggard privatization program.

Interested bidders are expected to include Thai Charoen Corporation Group (TCC), Belgium's Anheuser-Busch InBev NV, Japan's Asahi Group Holding Ltd, and Dutch Heineken NV which already holds a 5% stake in Sabeco. The Vietnamese government currently holds 89% of the brewer's shares.

"It's an opportunity for an international brewer to acquire a stake in the number one brewery in the country," said John Ditty, managing partner of KPMG Tax and Advisory Ltd, Vietnam. "There are probably no other countries left where you can do that, and Vietnam is one of the most appealing beer markets not only in Asia but in the world."

The government also plans to float a major stake in Hanoi Alcohol and Beer Beverages, or Habeco, in early 2018. Vietnam, one of the world's few remaining communist states, has more than a healthy beer market going for it nowadays.

The economy is expected to grow 6.3% this year, fueled partly by an injection of more than US\$20 billion in actualized foreign direct investment (FDI), growing exports and a rising stock market – the Ho Chi Minh City Stock Index hit a historic high of 970.02 in early December.

"There are certainly opportunities here because we've got an economy that is going to grow at 6% for the next ten years," Ditty, a 24-year resident in the country, optimistically predicts.

Vietnam has come a long way since 1986, when it first launched a reform program known as doi moi that has gradually and successfully shifted the country from a command to more market-oriented economy.

But loosening government control over some 4,500 state owned enterprises (SOEs), many of them dominating important economic sectors such as banking and energy, is still unfinished business.

By 2016, more than 2,000 SOEs had state ownership of above 50%, while 700 were still 100% state-owned, according to a November report on SOE reform by Viet Capital Securities, a local brokerage.

Between 2011 to 2016 the government only divested 21 trillion dong (US\$926 million) worth of state capital, about one-fifth of what the state should earn from divesting Sabeco alone.

Faced with climbing public debt, which hit 63.7% of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2016, near the government's self-set ceiling of 65%, and declining tax revenues caused by reduced import tariffs as required by 10 free trade agreements the country has entered, selling off state assets is now crucial to raise funds for budget spending.

Under an accelerated program, the government has announced plans to partly privatize 137 SOEs with state capital worth US\$13 billion between 2017 to 2020. The divestment will include more than 50% of their holdings in 106 SOEs, less than 50% in 27, and 35% in the remaining four. Additionally, the government plans to divest another US\$2.9 billion in state capital from another 375 SOEs.

There have already been some revenue raising success stories. For instance, Jardine Cycle & Carriage, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Singapore-listed Jardine Matheson, last month bought a 5.53% stake in Vietnam Dairy Products Joint Stock Company (Vinamilk), Vietnam's largest dairy products producer and distributor, for US\$616 million.

In late 2016, the government had previously sold a 5.4% stake in Vinamilk to Thai Charoen Corporation Group (TCC), a Thailand-based beverage producer that in 2013 bought Fraser & Neave (F&N) for US\$11 billion, giving it a huge consumer products distribution network in Southeast Asia.

Before Vinamilk launched its IPO on the Ho Chi Minh Stock Exchange in 2003, the 100% government-owned company was worth an estimated US\$400 million. Although the state's share is now just 36%, that equity is worth a lot more than its 100% stake was in 2003, analysts note.

"Today they hold 36% of a US\$14 billion dollar business so you have US\$6 billion in value there," said Andy Ho, chief investment officer of VinaCapital Group, an asset management company.

One reason the privatization of SOEs has been so slow has been the government's aim of getting maximum value for assets, a more difficult task when the stock market was sluggish, as it was in the first half of 2017.

Between October and December, the Ho Chi Minh City Stock Index has jumped from 800 to 940 points. "It's not slow, it's smart," Ho said. "Now the market is up and you can get your best value, so do it."

While the government has been smart to get the most value for its assets, and the best strategic partners for its SOEs, there is a certain urgency to raise funds. In 2019, Vietnam will achieve middle-income nation status, meaning it will no longer be eligible for concessionary loans from the main official development assistance (ODA) providers.



“I think the desire to hasten the equitization process is always there, but now it is more urgent for the government because they need money to finance infrastructure projects and support economic growth,” said Pham Hong Hai, chief executive officer of HSBC Bank (Vietnam) Ltd. “The second reason is to increase the efficiency of the SOEs, which have been less efficient than the private sector.”

There is plenty of empirical evidence that privatization is good for corporate efficiency, something even the Vietnamese government acknowledges.

“The Ministry of Finance reported that the 2015 business results of 350 companies after equitization showed impressive growth of chartered capital (+72%), total assets (+39%), revenue (+29%) and earnings before tax (+49%) compared with before equitization,” Viet Capital Securities, a local brokerage, said in a recent report.

Vietnam still has a way to go in creating a dynamic local private sector, which some observers say has been neglected while the government has been more focused on encouraging FDI inflows.

“The truth is that domestic businesses do not do very well, especially in manufacturing and exports; we are not competitive,” said Nguyen Duc Thanh, director of the Vietnam Center for Economic and Policy Research (VEPR), a think tank. “Most of our exports are handled by multinationals and more competition is coming in with the AEC (Association of Southeast Asian Nations Economic Community).”

Thanh said the recognized need to create a more efficient, internationally competitive private sector is one of the chief drivers of the privatization push, but it might run up against the government’s desire to keep a grip on the economy through controlling stakes in SOEs.

“The government and the [Communist] Party want to control the social situation,” Thanh said. “So the question is not whether privatization will happen. The question is will it be slow or fast.”

## PUBLIC HEALTH NEWS

### Alcohol taxes are low, have not kept up with inflation

Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs  
December 2017

PISCATAWAY, NJ – State alcohol excise taxes are typically only a few cents per drink and have not kept pace with inflation, according to a new study in the January issue of the Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs. Raising those taxes, according to the authors, represents an opportunity for states to increase revenues while simultaneously improving public health outcomes and costs related to excessive alcohol consumption.

Although excise taxes are the most common type of tax levied in alcohol sales, used by all 50 states for beer and by most states for wine and spirits, they are not well understood. The formula is a bit counterintuitive, based on a fixed cost per unit volume (for example, \$18 for a barrel of beer, regardless of the brand or cost of the beer). Because the tax is not easy to understand (how much is a barrel of beer?), in the current study researchers calculated tax amounts in relation to standard drink sizes in the United States. They found that, across states, the average excise tax is 3 cents for a 12 ounce beer, 3 cents for a 5 ounce glass of wine, and 5 cents for a typical shot of liquor.

Also, because flat taxes are based on volume sold—not on a percentage of the sale price—they don’t keep pace with inflation. Added to that, most states haven’t changed the amount of their excise taxes in quite some time. As a result, in inflation-adjusted dollars, the researchers calculated that the average state alcohol excise tax has declined by 30% for beer, 27% for wine, and 32% for spirits since 1991.

“The most important finding here is that alcohol excise taxes are incredibly low,” says the study’s lead author Timothy S. Naimi, M.D., M.P.H., from Boston Medical Center and BU School of Medicine. “In several states, the price is so low that it rounds to zero pennies—basically no excise tax at all.”

Two factors likely contributed to this decline, says Naimi. First, excise taxes don’t receive a lot of attention. They happen behind the scenes and are already built into the cost of a case of beer or a glass of wine at a bar—the consumer doesn’t see them. And second, there is political pressure not to raise any kind of taxes on alcohol sales.

For reducing problems caused by alcohol consumption, “no policy has a better track record of effectiveness than do alcohol taxes,” Naimi said. “There’s very strong evidence that raising prices through taxes or other means—making it a little less cheap—has lots of possible benefits. For people who are drinking a lot, it has a surprisingly big impact on consumption and related harms. Raising taxes could help solve state budget problems and is a great way to raise revenue. A lot of people would cast it as a win-win.”

Research cited in the study shows that 88,000 deaths and \$249 billion in costs each year are caused by excessive alcohol consumption in the United States. Naimi said research has shown that when the cost of a drink increases by 10 percent, people tend to drink 5 to 6 percent less. This decrease could help bring about reductions in health care costs, alcohol-related car accidents and other harms.

Although excise taxes could be written to be indexed to inflation, no state has done that, according to Naimi.

“Unless taxes are adjusted, they’re constantly eroding due to inflation,” he said. “Price has a dampening effect on consumption, and higher taxes definitely put the brakes on how much people drink. It’s a pretty efficient way to cut consumption and related harms.”

An accompanying editorial written by Jeremy Bray, Ph.D., of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, and Thomas Babor, Ph.D., M.P.H., of UConn Health in Farmington, Connecticut, says that Naimi and his colleagues make a compelling case for increasing excise alcohol taxes as a way to increase state revenues, decrease the consequences of excessive consumption and reduce the need for health care services. Bray and Babor refer to this potential as an alcohol policy “trifecta.”

“[M]ost states have not only an opportunity to raise revenues and improve public health at the same time but also a moral obligation to prevent the further erosion of the protections that tax policies provide to excessive drinkers,” they write. “From our perspective, this type of descriptive research . . . has enormous implications for policy that should not be ignored.”

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To arrange an interview with Timothy S. Naimi, M.D., M.P.H., please contact Jenny Eriksen Leary at 617-638-6841 or [jenny.eriksen@bmc.org](mailto:jenny.eriksen@bmc.org).

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Naimi, T. S., Blanchette, J. G., Xuan, Z., & Chaloupka, F. J. (January 2018). Erosion of state alcohol excise taxes in the United States. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*, 79(1), 43-48. doi:10.15288/jsad.2018.79.43

Bray, J., & Babor, T. F. (January 2018). An alcohol policy trifecta: Reduce alcohol problems, save on health care, generate public revenues. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*, 79(1), 5-6. doi:10.15288/jsad.2018.79.5

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The *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs* ([www.jsad.com](http://www.jsad.com)) is published by the Center of Alcohol Studies at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. It is the oldest substance-related journal published in the United States.

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To learn about education and training opportunities for addiction counselors and others at the Rutgers Center of Alcohol Studies, please visit [AlcoholStudiesEd.rutgers.edu](http://AlcoholStudiesEd.rutgers.edu).

## The Truth About Holiday Spirits: How to Celebrate Safely This Season

News Release

News Provided By National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, National Institutes of Health

December 12, 2017

BETHESDA, Md., Dec. 12, 2017 /PRNewswire/ -- We all want to celebrate during the holidays, and more people are likely to drink beyond their limits during this season than at other times of the year. Some will suffer adverse consequences that range from fights to falls to traffic crashes. Sadly, we often put ourselves and others at risk because we don't understand how alcohol affects us during an evening of celebratory drinking.

Despite the potential dangers, myths about drinking persist, which—for some—can prove fatal. Scientific studies supported by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism provide important information that challenges these widespread, yet incorrect, beliefs about how quickly alcohol affects the body and how long the effects of drinking last.

## Alcohol's Effects Begin Quickly

Holiday revelers may not recognize that critical decision-making abilities and driving-related skills are already diminished long before a person shows physical signs of intoxication.

Initially, alcohol acts as a stimulant, so people who drink may feel upbeat and excited. But don't be fooled. Alcohol soon decreases inhibitions and judgment, and can lead to reckless decisions. As we consume more alcohol, reaction time suffers and behavior becomes poorly controlled and sometimes even aggressive—leading to fights and other types of violence. Continued drinking causes the slurred speech and loss of balance that we typically associate with being drunk. At higher levels, alcohol acts as a depressant, which causes the drinker to become sleepy and in some cases pass out. At these levels, alcohol can also cause blackouts—which are when a person does not remember what happened while he or she was intoxicated. At even higher levels, drinkers face the danger of life-threatening alcohol overdose due to the suppression of vital life functions.

## Even When Drinking Stops—Alcohol's Effects Do Not

During an evening of drinking, it's also easy to misjudge how long alcohol's effects last. For example, many people believe that they will begin to sober up—and be able to drive safely—once they stop drinking and have a cup of coffee. The truth is that alcohol continues to affect the brain and body long after the last drink has been finished. Even after someone stops drinking, alcohol in the stomach and intestine continues to enter the bloodstream, impairing judgment and coordination for hours.

### Before You Celebrate—Plan Ahead

Of course, we don't intend to harm anyone when we celebrate during the holiday season. Yet, violence and traffic fatalities persist, and myths about drinking live on—even though scientific studies have documented how alcohol affects the brain and body.

Because individuals are so different, it is difficult to give specific advice about drinking. But certain facts are clear—there's no way to sober up faster and no way to make good decisions when you are drinking too much, too fast.

So, this holiday season, do not underestimate the effects of alcohol. Don't believe you can beat them, or they may beat you.

Here are some tips to keep in mind if you host a holiday gathering:

- Offer a variety of nonalcoholic drinks—water, juices, sparkling sodas. Nonalcoholic drinks help counteract the dehydrating effects of alcohol. Also, the other fluids may slow the rate of alcohol absorption into the body and reduce the peak alcohol concentration in the blood.
- Provide a variety of healthy foods and snacks. Food can slow the absorption of alcohol and reduce the peak level of alcohol in the body by about one-third. It can also minimize stomach irritation and gastrointestinal distress the following day.
- Help your guests get home safely—use designated drivers and taxis. Anyone getting behind the wheel of a car should not have any alcohol.
- If you are a parent, understand the underage drinking laws—and set a good example.

## Sobering Up—Myths and Facts

*Myth: You can drive as long as you are not slurring your words or acting erratically.*

**Fact:** The coordination needed for driving is compromised long before you show signs of intoxication and your reaction time is slowed. Plus, the sedative effects of alcohol increase your risk of nodding off or losing attention behind the wheel.

*Myth: Drink coffee. Caffeine will sober you up.*

**Fact:** Caffeine may help with drowsiness but not with the effects of alcohol on decision-making or coordination. The body needs time to metabolize (break down) alcohol and then to return to normal. Also, when caffeine wears off, your body will need to deal with post-caffeine sleepiness. There are no quick cures—only time will help.

*Myth: The warm feeling you get from drinking alcohol insulates you from the cold of winter. When you're drinking, there's no need to wear a coat when it's cold outside.*

**Fact:** Alcohol widens the tiny blood vessels right under the skin, so they quickly fill with warm blood. This makes you feel warm or hot, and can cause your skin to flush and perspire. But your body temperature is actually dropping, because while alcohol is

pulling warmth from your core to the skin surface, it is also depressing the area of your brain that controls temperature regulation. In cold environments, this can lead to hypothermia. So, wear a coat when it's cold outside, particularly if you are drinking alcohol.

### Have a safe holiday season!

For more information on celebrating your holidays safely and tips for cutting back, visit <https://www.RethinkingDrinking.niaaa.nih.gov>.

SOURCE National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, National Institutes of Health

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## Scientists want to develop drugs to reverse fetal alcohol syndrome — but will it reduce prevention efforts?

*Researchers hope to eventually develop medications that women could take during their pregnancy, or give to their newborn child, to reverse fetal alcohol syndrome*

National Post

By Vanessa Hrvatin

December 12, 2017

Researchers are developing new drugs that aim to lessen or even reverse the effects of fetal alcohol syndrome, but some scientists are skeptical about the claims, and worry that more medication could detract from prevention efforts.

It's estimated that at least one per cent of the population suffers from fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) — permanent brain damage from prenatal alcohol exposure — although many experts consider this a low estimate. (Canada's first population-based prevalence study is set to be published early next year.) Children with FASD often have a range of disabilities, including learning and behavioural problems. While there are different ways of managing symptoms — no single treatment exists for the debilitating disorder.

But researchers are working on it. A study published in November found lithium could treat sleep disruption and memory loss in mice, both common symptoms associated with FASD. And earlier this year, researchers found that giving baby rats exposed to alcohol in utero a combination of two drugs reversed their memory and learning deficits. Researchers hope to eventually develop medications that women could take during their pregnancy, or give to their newborn child, to lessen or even reverse the impacts alcohol had on the developing fetus.

Not everyone thinks this is a good thing.

Dr. James Reynolds, a professor of biomedical and molecular sciences at Queen's University who researches FASD, said that while drug research is important, there's concern that it could downplay prevention efforts.

"(Drug development) shouldn't distract in any way from efforts in prevention," he said. "There is no substitute for prevention because we know that drugs are rarely curative."

But Dr. Eva Redei thinks science is coming close to a breakthrough. The FASD researcher at Northwestern University in Illinois said the need to advance drugs to treat and ideally reverse the disorder is absolutely essential.

"This isn't a replacement for prevention but unfortunately prevention doesn't work because despite all of the efforts people will continue to drink during pregnancy," she said. "I am confident that in a few years there will definitely be a treatment."

Her team is waiting on funding to start a clinical trial to test two drugs they believe could reverse the effects of FASD after birth.

Redei said the idea isn't to encourage people to drink during pregnancy and think they can reverse it with a simple pill. Instead, the real intention is to help women who suffer from addiction or who drink in their first trimester before knowing they're pregnant.

While Reynolds agreed that prevention will probably never be 100 per cent effective, he hesitated at the idea of a drug that will reverse FASD. He cautioned that scientists still don't understand exactly what alcohol does to a developing child.

"I am personally quite skeptical that we'll find one mechanism that alcohol targets to affect the developing brain, so the idea of a drug that targets one key process doesn't seem realistic," he said. "It might be beneficial to individuals with FASD if there was a drug to allow them to have better cognitive function, but it's unlikely it would ever restore them to quote unquote normal function."

Another issue is that most children with FASD are already on several medications.

Reynolds said people with FASD are one of the most “highly over-medicated groups,” and said other forms of treatment with proven benefits (such as exercise and physical therapy) are just as important. He believes many families would welcome non-pharmacological treatments.

Tracy Moisan is the mother of two adopted sons, both with FASD. Her eldest son is 12 and takes four medications every day — each one targets a different symptom. Her younger son is six, and takes two medications daily.

“Even with the best guidance you don’t know how your child is going to respond to medication so you’re really playing trial and error which, as a parent, is extremely difficult,” she said. “Our kids are on medication because we feel they need to be, but (my husband and I) struggle with this decision all the time and constantly question ourselves.”

Moisan said the topic of medication is passionately debated within the FASD community.

“Medication is part of the picture but I don’t see something being developed that will actually reverse FASD,” she said. “I don’t know any parent where drugs is the only strategy they’re employing.”

Whether medication would be accessible to those in need is also an issue. There’s a culture of “blame and shame” when it comes to FASD, which could prevent women from asking their physician for medication. Women suffering from addiction might not even have access to a doctor.

For Moisan, prevention is still a huge piece of the puzzle, but she believes the tone around it needs to change. Her sons’ biological mother grew up in foster care and has a history of addiction and trauma. Moisan thinks it’s wrong to say she made a choice to drink.

“I think our prevention efforts really focus on telling women they shouldn’t have a drink if they’re pregnant or trying to get pregnant, but that’s only half the piece,” she said. “Talking about FASD as entirely preventable drastically oversimplifies it and doesn’t get to the deeper issues. We can’t frame this as just a choice.”

Reynolds cautions that parents shouldn’t have false hope about a pill that could reverse the effects of FASD. But he says drug studies are still important because they give us more insight into a complex disorder.

“(These drug studies) give us more clues about why and how alcohol damages the developing brain, and any information that helps us better understand this is valuable in and of itself.”

## DAILY NEWS

### The Breathalyzer’s Effect on Drinking & Driving

*How scientists and bureaucrats conspired to make American roads safer for driving.*

The Daily Beast  
By Wayne Curtis  
December 13, 2017

Eighty years ago, science slipped into the backseat of your car, rolled down the windows, and made itself at home. It has remained there ever since.

In 1937, the first drivers were fined for drinking and driving based on evidence from a newfangled device called the “drunkometer.” It could figure out how much you’d been drinking based on what you exhaled, and it fundamentally reshaped our relationship with liquor, not to mention the relationship between lawmakers and local police.

Technology often arises to solve a problem, and this was no exception. Drunk driving had long been a problem. Before Henry Ford was born, drunk drivers got behind the reins, causing mayhem and destruction with horse and buggy.

As late as 1915, when Ford’s Model T’s were already tootling about, a Georgia man named Vince Sullivan tore down the road at a high rate of speed in his horse-drawn carriage. He swore loudly as he passed a church then swerved into a yard and tore up a garden fence. He was arrested for drunk driving (also referred to at the time as “drunk and driving” or “driving while drunk,” but never “drink driving,” as the British have awkwardly phrased it).

A report in the Macon Telegraph suggested the circular vagaries behind Sullivan’s offense: “The court holds that a drunk is a man who races a horse along a public highway, uses bad language and is so under the influence that that he can’t keep in the highway but tears down fences along the side of the road or street.”

But this definition gets at a central point: For years, behavior defined inebriety, not consumption. If you acted like a drunk and damaged property or person like a drunk, you were drunk and unfit for the road and subsequently could be jailed or fined.

For obvious reasons, this became more of an issue with the rise of the internal combustion engine. As horsepower increased and speed limits rose, the consequences of piloting a couple of tons of hurtling steel with impaired reflexes—and without a sober horse as co-pilot—grew more dire. The first recorded arrest for drunk driving in an automobile took place in London in 1897, when a sodden 25-year-old taxi driver plowed into a grocery wagon.

The first American laws against driving a motor vehicle while impaired were passed in New York in 1910, at which time the United States was home to nearly a half-million automobiles. And the goal of the constabulary soon shifted more to detecting drunk drivers before they caused damage or death.

At the outset, drunkenness was determined by observation. If a car was moving erratically, the police were empowered to pull it over and administer a field test. The officer would sniff the driver's breath, and then would ask the suspect to follow the tip of a pencil with their eyes, stand on one foot, or walk a line the officer had drawn on the pavement in chalk. Another test was to ask someone to say "Methodist Episcopal" three times in a row.

Such tests were of course subject to grading on a curve. A well-known local doctor might be deemed sober enough to continue home, but a similarly soused warehouseman might be frogmarched off to the hoosegow to sleep it off and be levied a fine. Also, these tests lacked a certain scientific rigor.

So scientists showed up, clipboards in hand. In the 1920s, a Swedish toxicologist named Erik Widmark, a giant in forensic pharmacology, developed protocols for analyzing blood to determine how much alcohol a person had tipped. The early approach was intrusive—five small tubes of blood would be collected from your earlobe, and then a carefully measured portion placed in a small cup over a solution, which changed composition and color as the ethanol in the blood evaporated. (Five samples were needed for multiple tests to ensure reliability.) While Widmark's blood tests were widely employed in Europe (Nazi Germany embraced them in 1938; Sweden established a limit of 0.08-percent blood alcohol in 1941), the blood test was largely resisted in the United States as being overly invasive.

Addressing the problem, several devices appeared soon after that could estimate how much alcohol was in your system by testing your breath, which science had calibrated to match the alcohol in your blood. Dr. Emil Bogen of California used chemicals held in a football bladder for his device; an inventor in Chicago named W.D. McNally developed a similar instrument that got wide play in the popular science press, although it never caught on.

In 1931, Dr. Rolla N. Harger of Indiana University developed and named a breath-based testing unit he called "the drunkometer" as a joke, but the name stuck. The suspect would be asked to inflate a balloon, the contents of which would then be passed through a purple mixture of potassium permanganate, sulfuric acid, and water. Trace amounts of alcohol would alter the purple color of the solution. This would be compared with the color of test tubes prepared from samples of people whose alcohol blood content levels were known.

By 1937 the results were accepted by state courts in Indiana; two drivers that year were fined \$5 each for drunk driving. In 1939 Indiana passed the first state laws linking degrees of intoxication with alcohol blood levels, defining drunkenness as having a blood alcohol content of 0.15-percent—nearly double the common threshold of 0.08-percent today. "Science is replacing guesswork in obtaining evidence in drunken-driving cases," The New York Times reported.

Still, the drunkometer was cumbersome. So in 1954 a more refined version—called the Breathalyzer—was rolled out at the National Safety Congress, followed by tests in six communities in the U.S. and Canada. This device was developed by Lt. Robert Borkenstein, supervisor of the Indiana State Police Laboratory, who had help from Indiana State University. (Note to self: Do not mess with Indiana when it comes to drunk driving.)

The early version wasn't exactly pocket-sized. It weighed 14 pounds and had a tube into which the suspect blew. The breath sample then bubbled up through a liquid, which would change color from yellow to blue—the bluer it became, the drunker you were. This was analyzed by photoelectric cells, which it then translated to a meter and showed how much a person had drunk. (It wasn't foolproof; some found they could clog the machine by spitting into it. Strainers were installed.)

Technology is adept at shrinking things down if nothing else. Today's breathalyzers are smaller and far more complicated internally—most employ a fuel cell with two electrodes bridged by electrolytes. The ethanol in the breath is broken down by one electrode into acetic acid, while the other extracts oxygen, creating a mild electric current between them. A microprocessor analyzes the current, and calculates how much alcohol is present, which is converted to a blood alcohol content percentage.

For about \$25, you can now buy a BACtrack analyzer that fits on a keychain, and instantly gives you your blood alcohol level in cheerful red numbers with reasonable accuracy and reliability.



As the technology has gotten smaller and easier to use, it has enabled social control to be more easily corralled by centralized authority. In the past century, drunk driving has gone from being a matter of local discretion to something now tightly regulated from above. Thanks to science, states first took the power to determine who was drunk away from local police by establishing blood alcohol levels. Later the federal government took that control from the states by making the 0.08-percent blood alcohol level a virtual national mandate by controlling grants for highway construction and the like, most notably with 1998 legislation signed by President Bill Clinton.

As we mark eight decades of laws based on what was once called the "chemical breath smeller," we thus mark the rise of science and federal oversight, with the incontrovertible result that society has become safer as a result.

At a time when science seems widely mistrusted and the federal government widely loathed, it also may mark the last time that a dramatic, national policy backed by facts and overseen by legislators in Washington has gone unresisted, virtually unremarked, and hailed for its impressive track record of success.

## Safe socializing for the holidays

### Healthy Alcohol Marketplace

By Pamela Erickson, Public Action Management, PLC

December 12, 2017

The holidays can be a time for tinsel and lights and merriment-but celebrating doesn't have to be an occasion to overdo it. As mindful drinking catches on and low- and non-alcohol drinks are more widely available, there are more choices for people who want to embrace moderation this holiday season.

And there are organizations that help support a more mindful approach to drinking. Better Drinking Culture helps promote healthier attitudes about alcohol. They tout the benefits of moderate drinking, the idea of quality over quantity and the joys of being hangover-free. Hello Sunday Morning is an organization with an online community of over 100,000 people world-wide who are trying to have a healthier relationship with alcohol, and Sunday mornings without hangovers. Club Soda, based in the UK, has great strategies for refusal skills when you don't want to drink the grog.

Safety around alcohol is everyone's responsibility. Off-license establishments, as well as bars and restaurants, need to be consistent about checking ID, and not selling alcohol to intoxicated customers. Promotions that encourage overconsumption should not be used as a way to boost sales. Because of alcohol's effect on judgment, these kinds of safeguards are needed.

If you do decide to drink when you go out, here are some steps to help you stay safe.

### **Educate yourself: What's in your drink?**

A standard drink pour is 12 oz. beer, 5 oz. wine and 1.5 oz. of liquor. Beer is usually sold in measured amounts such as a standard size bottle or a poured pint. But wine and spirits are "free poured" so the precise amount varies from drink to drink, and some bartenders like to give "generous pours".

The alcohol content of these products varies widely from 4.2% alcohol in a light beer to 10% in a double IPA. Wine can be 10-17% and spirits 40-95%. This is even more complicated when a mixed drink contains several shots. Certain mixers speed up the body's absorption of alcohol; sugar slows down absorption, so mixed drinks made with diet soda could affect a person differently. And it pays to do your research-- some "heavier" dark beers actually have less alcohol and calories than light colored-beers. The way that alcohol affects an individual can be different if they haven't eaten, are dehydrated, or are stressed--and it's easy to be stressed during the holidays.

### **Plan your ride**

Every day 29 people in the US die in alcohol-related vehicle crashes--that's one person every 50 minutes. We need to take steps to cut fatalities on our roads due to alcohol misuse, as we continue to see over 10,000 deaths every year. That is way too many.

In most states the blood alcohol content over which driving is illegal is .08%. In 2013, the National Highway Safety Board announced its support for lowering the BAC level to .05, since some impairment can happen at lower levels. But so far, only Utah lowered the legal BAC for driving, although it's not effective until December 30, 2018. Critics worry about the lack of resources for implementing a lower standard, since they feel that there is not enough enforcement the .08 level that already exists.

The bottom line is you don't want to be driving over the BAC limit in your state particularly since it's so hard to measure your own BAC. The safest approach is: if you will be drinking, plan on not driving. Make plans for how you'll get home before you head out. Make arrangements with a designated driver (and maybe buy them a few delicious non-alcoholic drinks), and make sure you have info on hand for local cabs or ride services.



**Hydrate!**

Drinking water between alcoholic drinks is a good way to keep from drinking too quickly and avoiding dehydration. (In New Zealand, having water available to patrons has been written into law: bars are required to make available free water as part of the 2012 The Sale and Supply of Alcohol Act. Not a bad idea.)

Consider the "mindful drinking" campaign

Organizations such as Better Drinking Culture, ClubSoda, and Hello Sunday Morning have some good tips for enjoying yourself without drinking too much. They have great ideas for improving refusal skills and tips for changing your behavior around drinking without having to give up the social interactions we all need to stay healthy.

**Consider drinking low alcohol or no alcohol products**

There are a lot more of them now and they are of better quality. Brewers, vintners and distillers have gotten hip to the idea that not everyone wants to drink alcohol, and have started focusing on the market for low and non-alcoholic drinks. Beer, wines, even spirits, are now available.

Licensees that understand new patterns of behavior will stock no- and low-alcohol products and brush up on their mock-tail repertoire. Non-drinking patrons will likely spend money on drinks that make them feel special, too.

Links:

<https://fortune.com/2016/07/13/non-alcoholic-beer/>

<https://joinclubsoda.co.uk/>

<https://betterdrinkingculture.org/>

<https://www.hellosundaymorning.org/>

<https://www.nhtsa.gov/risky-driving/drun-driving>

**Shocking CCTV footage part of campaign to tackle rise in alcohol-related accidents on railways**

*Network Rail has joined forces with British Transport Police to launch a campaign aimed at reversing an upward trend in alcohol-related incidents on and around the railway.*

PRWeek

By Magda Ibrahim

December 13, 2017

UNITED KINGDOM - Keep a Clear Head is the key message of the campaign, which is being promoted by Network Rail, British Transport Police (BTP) and the Rail Safety and Standards Board (RSSB).

The campaign has been created in a bid to cut the numbers of drinking-related accidents that take place during the festive period.

Last year, there were 7,419 recorded alcohol-related incidents, an increase of 17 per cent on 2015/16.

The festive period is the most risky time, with 16 per cent of all the incidents taking place around Christmas and New Year, according to Donna Mitchell, media relations manager (campaigns) for Network Rail.

"As the festive season approaches we see a sharp rise in alcohol-related incidents on the rail network and our data shows that on average there are more incidents involving intoxication reported in December than any other month," she explained.

"This campaign is part of our long-term strategy in collaboration with the British Transport Police and RSSB, to reduce the number of alcohol-related incidents on and around the railway."

As part of the campaign, which launched yesterday (12 December), a video has been created from real CCTV that which shows people having accidents at rail stations.

The two-minute film starts with the message "Don't let drinking turn your world upside down: keep a clear head on the railway this Christmas", before showing a series of intoxicated travellers stumbling and falling onto the tracks, some narrowly missed by moving trains.

Figures show that 21 people were killed and 91 people were seriously injured over the past 10 years due to alcohol-related incidents at the platform edge.

Passengers boarding and alighting trains were involved in 469 alcohol-related accidents in the past five years.

Network Rail and BTP are sharing the messaging on social media channels including Facebook and Twitter, using the hashtag #clearhead.

Meanwhile, the organisations are holding alcohol awareness events at Britain's busiest rail stations in the run up to Christmas, with staff handing out printed materials to travellers.

They also plan to target Christmas revellers in pubs and clubs near railway stations and level crossings with a reminder to 'keep a clear head'.

"We're using a mix of marketing materials to reach our audience, with a particular focus on targeting key railway station locations that see a high number of alcohol-related incidents and level crossings that have close proximity to drinking establishments," added Mitchell.

"We'll be using our social media channels throughout the festive period to push out our messages.

"We've partnered with Drinkaware, The Beer and Pub Association and Alcohol Concern and they will be supporting us throughout the campaign both on social media and through sharing our marketing collateral in their networks."

Allison Potter-Drake, head of corporate comms at BTP, said: "Above all we want everyone to have fun and enjoy the festive period and we certainly aren't against drinking alcohol. The aim of the campaign is to highlight the risks and consequences associated with excessive drinking on or near the railway.

"We take alcohol-related incidents so seriously because of the impact they have on so many people, not only those involved, but other passengers, rail staff and our officers and other emergency services who have to deal with the aftermath.

"If the campaign encourages people to think before they drink and stops them from doing something that might harm themselves or others, it will have been a success."

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