

Why has Alberta proposed tougher sanctions for drivers with a blood alcohol content of .05%?

There are currently sanctions in place to address drivers with a blood alcohol content of .05%. Currently, peace officers can issue a 24 hour disqualification to drivers whose ability to operate a motor vehicle is affected by alcohol. The changes to the *Traffic Safety Act* regarding the increase of these sanctions are intended to encourage drivers to become personally accountable for their actions behind the wheel and to take greater personal responsibility for their driving behaviour.

The following chart contains some of the more common symptoms people exhibit at various BAC levels, and the probable effects on driving ability:

Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) ¹	Typical Effects	Predictable Effects on Driving
.02%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some loss of judgment • Relaxation • Slight body warmth • Altered mood 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decline in visual functions (rapid tracking of a moving target) • Decline in ability to perform two tasks at the same time (divided attention)
.05%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exaggerated behavior • May have loss of small-muscle control (e.g., focusing your eyes) • Impaired judgment • Usually good feeling • Lowered alertness • Release of inhibition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced coordination • Reduced ability to track moving objects • Difficulty steering • Reduced response to emergency driving situations
.08%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Muscle coordination becomes poor (e.g., balance, speech, vision, reaction time, and hearing) • Harder to detect danger • Judgment, self-control, reasoning, and memory are impaired 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concentration • Short-term memory loss • Speed control • Reduced information processing capability (e.g., signal detection, visual search) • Impaired perception
.10%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear deterioration of reaction time and control • Slurred speech, poor coordination, and slowed thinking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced ability to maintain lane position and brake appropriately
.15%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Far less muscle control than normal • Vomiting may occur (unless this level is reached slowly or a person has developed a tolerance for alcohol) • Major loss of balance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substantial impairment in vehicle control, attention to driving task, and in necessary visual and auditory information processing

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¹Information in this table shows the BAC level at which the effect usually is first observed, and has been gathered from a variety of sources including the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, the American Medical Association, the National Commission Against Drunk Driving, and www.webMD.com.

Source: <http://www.stopimpaireddriving.org/ABCsBACWeb/page2.htm>

Blood Alcohol Content Estimation Charts

http://protect.aglc.ca/protectuploads/document/BAC%20Estimation%20Chart_ProTect.pdf

There is a large body of research, which indicates that impairment begins at low blood alcohol content levels. For example:

Researchers also state that the .05% blood alcohol content limit would not interfere with 'social drinking' "but rather might impinge on more excessive consumption by those intending to drive." (p.iii11)

"Experiments conducted in laboratories, on driving simulators, and on closed access courses consistently demonstrate that critical driving related skills, particularly information processing and divided attention tasks, are adversely affected by low doses of alcohol." (p.iii14)

Chamberlain, E., and Solomon, R. (2002). "The case for a 0.05% criminal law blood alcohol concentration limit for driving." *Injury Prevention* 8(Suppl III):iii1-iii17.

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1765494/pdf/v008p0iii1.pdf>

"The experimental evidence, in conjunction with data from epidemiological studies shows that 0.05% BAC is a realistic statutory level in which most people's driving performance is impaired. This level of impairment in most cases, increases the probability of being involved in a traffic crash by 100%." (p. 162)

Howat, P., Sleet, D., and Smith, I. (1991). "Alcohol and driving: Is the 0.05% blood alcohol concentration limit justified?" *Drug and Alcohol Review*, 10, 151–166.

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1080/09595239100185211/pdf>

"Alcohol impairs some driving skills beginning with any significant departure from zero BAC. By BACs of 0.05 g/dl, the majority of the experimental studies examined reported significant impairment." (in intro, found on page linked below)

Moskowitz, H., and Fiorentino, D. (April 2000). "A review of the literature on the effects of low doses of alcohol on driving-related skills (Final Report DOT HS 809 028). Washington, DC: Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

http://dfconsulting.info/index_files/Areviewoftheliteratureontheeffectsoflowdosesofalcoholondrivingrelatedkills.htm