

Toolbox Talk – “Not a drop, not a drag” – Road Safety Week - November 2009

Introduction

This year's theme of Road Safety Week 2009 (23-27 November) is drink and drug driving. Barhale are fully committed to road safety and are fully aware of the risks associated with driving whilst under the influence of either drink or drugs. In alliance with Brake, Barhale will be proactively raising awareness, outlining the risks and realities of drink and drug driving, providing advice on how to tackle the problem. This toolbox talk is designed to raise your awareness along with targeted banners and posters to be displayed at Company premises during road safety week.

What is the problem & what are your responsibilities?

Alcohol or illegal drugs or a combination of both, seriously impair driving ability, causing death and injury on our roads. Barhale have a responsibility to ensure whilst driving on company business that you are safe and do not present these horrifying risks to other road users. The effects that even small amounts of alcohol or drugs have on a drivers system can be devastating. Even if you feel that you have sobered up the night before you can still be a major risk!

What are the effects on your ability to drive?

Many people are not aware of the effects even a small quantity of alcohol in their bloodstream has on their ability to drive safely. Driving after just one drink or the following morning after a night drinking presents a real risk to road users whether the driver is over the legal limit or not! Did you know that 51% of drivers have unintentionally driven the morning after whilst still under the influence. The tests undertaken on drivers that have died indicate, that one in three have alcohol in their system with a third of these under the legal limit.

Brake continue to campaign to reduce the legal limit for the UK, which has the highest legal limit in Europe (80mg per 100mls of blood) Even blood alcohol levels of less than this can affect brake reaction, lane discipline and normally results in, increased risk taking and impulsive behaviour by drivers. Research also indicates that eye movement in conjunction with steering is slower after drinking even when the driver is within the legal limit for driving.

The Law

If a driver kills someone through drink or drug driving they face up to 14 years imprisonment. Many people are still unclear about the UK driving laws The current law states:

“a person who, when driving or attempting to drive a motor vehicle on a road or other public place, is unfit to drive through drink or drugs is guilty of an offence”

Even though police enforcement can be difficult at times given issues associated with objective roadside drugs testing, it is quite simple, and the law is absolutely clear, police can and will conduct definitive blood tests to identify drugs when a driver is in custody, hospital or worse, has died in a road traffic accident.

Regardless of the law, Barhale have a zero tolerance towards drink and drug driving at work (in accordance with our drugs and alcohol policy statement PL4) and any individuals convicted of any such offences will become a matter for disciplinary action in accordance with the disciplinary or capability procedure.

What do the National UK statistics indicate?

- At least 15,935 people in the UK were killed or hurt by drink or drugged drivers in 2007. That equates to 2 people every hour!
- 1 in 6 road deaths are caused by a driver over the legal alcohol limit.
- In the UK, 478 people were killed by drivers over the drink-drive limit in 2007.
- Although exact figures are not available, research does suggest that similar numbers of deaths may be due to illegal drug drivers.

How much is too much?

Any amount of alcohol or drugs seriously impairs driving and increases the chances of killing either yourself or others. Alcohol takes longer than most people think to leave your system, and you can still be unsafe to drive the morning after. 1 in 5 drivers caught for drinking and driving offences are caught the morning after!

How Long?

It takes at least one hour for every half pint of beer, glass of wine or measure of spirits to get out of your system. You should count the hours from the time you finished your last drink, bearing in mind that every ones metabolism is different.

Example:

Question: If I have drunk five pints, how long until I am safe to drive?

Answer: It depends (on the strength of the beer, your weight, gender, metabolism and other factors such as what you have eaten) If you're an 11 stone man and finished drinking at midnight, you might be under the limit by midday. However, you are still likely to have alcohol in your system that could affect your driving. Drinking coffee, sleeping, or having a shower does not work. Only time.

What to do?

- Do not drive if there's even a slim chance that you are still under the influence. This includes medicinal drugs that will affect your ability to drive as well as illegal drugs and alcohol.
- Always use medication that doesn't cause drowsiness. If this is not possible you must inform your line manager that you are unable to continue driving duties whilst on your medication.
- Some medicine labels may advise you not to drive if you feel drowsy. If you are taking a medicine with a warning like this, then do not drive, even if you feel ok to do so. Its hard to judge whether or not you feel drowsy.
- Never take illegal drugs. Their effects are unpredictable and potentially lethal and you cannot determine how long they will stay in your system.
- If you feel you have any issues associated with alcohol or drugs it is vital to confront it in the interests of not only your health and safety but that of others as well. Barhale has a policy

of assistance with the rehabilitation of employees who voluntarily seek help and assistance for alcohol, prescription and illegal drug related problems. Such employees must seek help and assistance at the earliest possible opportunity from their Line Manager.

Testing for alcohol and drugs at Barhale

Barhale will test employees on an unannounced basis or following a significant accident or incident in accordance with our Drug & Alcohol Policy PL4 and Barhale Rail Statement of Drugs and Alcohol Policy BAR/RAIL/POL/004. The purpose of testing for these substances is not to unfairly catch people out but to ensure that workers are fit for the job and safe. Co-operation with testing procedures ensures anyone who is putting their life and others lives at risk by drink or drug driving can be identified quickly and easily.

Look out for others

Barhale wants you to look out for your colleagues as well to ensure they are safe and ensure the safety of others. You might not feel it is your business if your colleague is driving after drinking or taking drugs, but how would you feel if their actions led to them or someone else being killed or seriously injured?

If you suspect a colleague is taking drugs or drinking and driving, inform a manager in confidence or use the Barhale whistle blowing procedure by sending an e-mail to www.barhale.co.uk or call our hotline number on 01922 726774 and leave a message, this action could save your colleagues life or someone else's.

**Remember – Two people are hurt or killed by
drink and drug drivers every hour in the UK.**