

**30%**

Percentage of 15-20 year old drivers killed in motor vehicle crashes that had been drinking

**More than \$58 Billion**

The total cost per year attributable to the consequences of underage drinking

**18 to 25**

Age group with the highest prevalence of both binge and heavy drinking

**One in Ten**

Number of Americans aged 12 and older who drive under the influence of alcohol at least once in 12 months

**Nearly One-Third**

Number of the teens who mistakenly believe that a 12-ounce can of beer contains less alcohol than a standard shot of distilled spirits

**About 9.7 Million**

Persons aged 12 to 20 who drink alcohol at least once monthly

**54%**

Percentage of teenage motor vehicle deaths occurring on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday

**13**

The median age at which children begin drinking. Young people who begin drinking before age 15 are four times more likely to develop alcohol dependence than those who begin drinking at age 21

From Mothers Against Drunk Driving  
[www.madd.org](http://www.madd.org)

# Safety Sounds

A Monthly Safety Bulletin From SPSG Safety Group

## The Facts

Despite the dramatic progress made in the last 20 years to reduce alcohol-related traffic deaths among youth — and that alcohol is an illegal substance for those under the age of 21 — young drivers make up 6.9 percent of the total driving population, but constitute 13 percent of the alcohol-involved drivers in fatal crashes. Traffic crashes are the leading cause of death for children and young adults in the United States and a perfect conduit for reaching children and youth with traffic safety messages is through schools.

Research published in the American Journal of Public Health shows that the earlier a person begins drinking, the more likely they are to suffer from alcohol-related problems later in life, including alcohol dependency and drunk driving. Therefore, underage drinking prevention is a key part of preventing future drunk driving tragedies.

## Drinking Can Be Deadly

All too often, the public sentiment seems to reflect the feeling that alcohol is the least deadly drug. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth.

- Alcohol is the No. 1 drug of choice among youth — more than tobacco and far more than marijuana or any other illicit drug.
- Almost half of 8th graders and about three-quarters of high school seniors report drinking in the past year. Over half of high school seniors report being drunk within the past year.
- Recent research indicates that people who start drinking early are much more likely to be involved in alcohol-related traffic crashes — even when they reach adulthood.
- Alcohol is one of the most common contributors to injury, death, and criminal behavior among young people. It is also implicated in risky sexual behavior and suicide among youth.
- In addition to the immediate and potentially tragic consequences of underage drinking, early onset of alcohol use increases the risk for chronic alcohol addiction.

## December is 3D Month

### *National Drunk and Drugged Driving Prevention Month*

The education community plays a major role in reaching school-aged students with information on alcohol, impaired driving, and other traffic safety issues. Consider the following ideas for 3D Prevention Month and year-round events.

- Work with emergency medical service (EMS) and medical personnel, local law enforcement, the local Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) chapter, the state highway safety office, and other safety organizations to conduct a mock crash. Supplement the mock crash by obtaining a safety belt convincer so students will have the opportunity to experience the benefits of safety belts.
- Sponsor a safety holiday ornament fund raising campaign for your community. Have a school contest to come up with a design for the ornament and an impaired driving holiday slogan to go on the ornament. Proceeds from the campaign can go to support school traffic safety programs.
- Coordinate with your local mall to support their "visit Santa" program. Student and adult volunteers can hand out buttons with an impaired driving message to parents and give stickers with a safety belt message to children.
- Invite a motivational speaker to talk to students about having a fun holiday season without alcohol. Or bring in an impaired driver that has killed or injured someone or a victim who was injured by an impaired driver during the month of December to talk about how their life has changed because of alcohol. A resource for locating a speaker is your local Remove Intoxicated Drivers (RID) or Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) chapter.

