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**ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**

**INLAND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE**

Working Party on Road Traffic Safety

Fiftieth session  
Geneva, 7-10 November 2006

**REPORT OF THE WORKING PARTY ON ROAD TRAFFIC SAFETY  
ON ITS FIFTIETH SESSION**

Addendum

Revision of the consolidated Resolution on road traffic (R.E.1)

Driving under the influence of alcohol

Note by the secretariat

The members of WP.1 will find below the text on driving under the influence of alcohol (basis ECE/TRANS/WP.1/2006/3/Rev.2) as modified by the Working Party at its fiftieth session (see ECE/TRANS/WP.1/106, paragraphs 11-12).

The contents of this text will be incorporated into chapter 1 of the Consolidated Resolution R.E.1 as section 1.2, according to the draft structure of R.E.1 contained in document ECE/TRANS/WP.1/2005/15/Rev.3.

**R.E.1****Chapter 1 - General rules for behaviour in traffic**

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**1.2 Driving under the influence of alcohol****1.2.1 Overview of the problem**

The *World Report on Road Traffic Injury Prevention* (2004) classified drinking and driving as one of the five principal risk factors in road safety. The relationship of alcohol to collisions has been well demonstrated. Drivers who have been drinking have a much higher risk of collision involvement than drivers who have not been drinking, and this risk increases rapidly as blood alcohol concentration (BAC) increases. A legal limit on BAC for motor vehicle drivers is set in almost all European countries and defines when a driver is presumed to be too impaired to drive safely. In Europe the BAC legal limit can be as low as 0.0 g/l or as high as 0.8 g/l, the most common legal BAC limit being 0.5 g/l. Lower BAC limits are often established for young drivers and for drivers of commercial vehicles.

There is now strong evidence from a number of countries for the success of general deterrence, i.e., deterring drivers who have not previously been caught. An effective enforcement approach includes frequent, widespread and highly visible roadside checks. Enforcement is based on the principles of certain detection and conviction, swiftness of the proceeding and on consequences which are severe enough that most drivers would want to avoid them. The penalty strategy generally found to be most effective is loss of the driving privilege. Some have advocated severe punishment, such as imprisonment, for alcohol impaired driving offences. However, there is little compelling evidence that imprisonment results in lower re-arrest rates for convicted drunk drivers. Some studies have shown a deterrent effect for brief mandatory jail sentences of first-time offenders.

Other prevention approaches, such as education, attempt to reduce alcohol impaired driving by altering social norms, changing risky or dangerous behaviours, and creating safer environments. Communication and education also provide information to the public about the dangers of alcohol-impaired driving and the consequences of alcohol-impaired driving. While education and public information are necessary, they need to be part of a comprehensive strategy, and seem to work best when linked with highly visible enforcement efforts.

Finally, alcohol impaired driving may be a symptom of a larger problem of alcohol misuse. Many impaired driving offenders have alcohol dependency problems and without appropriate assessment and treatment, these offenders are likely to repeat their crime.

Taking into account their cultural, social, legal and economic environments, Governments should develop and implement a comprehensive programme to reduce death and injuries due to alcohol-impaired driving. An effective programme to reduce alcohol-impaired driving should be based on strong leadership, sound policy, good programme management and effective communication.

## **1.2.2 Recommendations**

### **1.2.2.1 Legislation**

Legislation can be used to define offences, enforcement actions, and penalties.

1. States should establish an upper legal limit not exceeding 0.5g/l for blood alcohol content or 0.25 mg per litre in the air expelled for drivers as provided for by paragraph 7 of the European Agreement supplementing the 1968 Convention on Road Traffic (the relevant amendment entered into force on 28 March 2006). However, a special blood alcohol level not exceeding 0.2 g/l **may** be established for certain categories of drivers, such as:

- Novice drivers,
- Drivers of commercial vehicles, including those carrying dangerous goods.

Penalties should be established for offenders. They may be treated administratively for blood alcohol levels which slightly exceed the established limit and criminally for levels which are significantly higher.

2. States should establish measures to prevent drivers from escaping alcohol testing or fix penalties for drivers who refuse to be tested.

3. When police respond to an accident, legislation should provide that all drivers involved are tested for alcohol.

4. States should consider the link, which might exist between alcohol-impaired driving and certain places providing for the consumption or purchase of alcoholic beverages. In this context, they should consider the possibility of introducing in their legislation measures aimed at preventing the consumption of alcoholic beverages, for example:

- by prohibiting or limiting the sale of alcoholic drinks in certain places, such as restaurants, shops and service stations along motorways,
- by prohibiting, in a moving vehicle, the presence, within the reach of the driver, of open bottles or other containers of alcoholic drinks.

5. States should establish an appropriate age limit for the purchase and public consumption of alcoholic beverages, so as to reduce drinking and driving among young drivers.

6. States should establish legislation to provide legal consequences (e.g., fines, license suspension, jail) for alcohol-impaired driving. The legislation should provide for more severe penalties for alcohol-impaired driving causing death or serious injury, as well as increased penalties for drivers who are repeat offenders (i.e., are found guilty of drunk driving on more than one occasion).

7. Governments should permit law enforcement officials to use passive alcohol sensors to enhance the detection of alcohol in drivers at roadside checks and during routine stops for alcohol-impaired driving. The use of evidentiary breath testing for alcohol at the roadside should also be permitted.

#### **1.2.2.2 Enforcement**

The rigour with which alcohol-impaired driving laws are enforced has a direct effect on the behaviour of persons driving under the influence of alcohol. Increasing drivers' perception of the risk of being detected is one of the most effective means of deterring alcohol-impaired driving. The following recommendations are made:

1. To enhance the perception of the likelihood of being caught for alcohol-impaired driving, the police should conduct regular enforcement activities such as random alcohol and roadside checks. For this purpose, specially equipped checkpoints may be established.
2. To optimize resources, police should use data to target enforcement activities to high-risk times (e.g., night, weekends) and locations (e.g., places for alcohol consumption, sports events, mass participation events) for alcohol-impaired driving.
3. Governments should regularly conduct campaigns to publicize alcohol-impaired driving enforcement to increase the general deterrent effect of the campaign.
4. Police should be trained in the appropriate procedures for deterring drink-driving and for detecting and apprehending alcohol-impaired drivers. For example, police should be trained in recognizing the cues for stopping vehicles (e.g., weaving) and cues for recognizing potential impairment (e.g., slurred speech, smell of alcohol).
5. To ensure that alcohol-impaired drivers are dealt with appropriately in all circumstances, all members of the law enforcement community should be trained in alcohol-related driving problems and alcohol-impaired driving laws and penalties.
6. It is also recommended that technicians receive training which allows them to ensure the calibration and maintenance of breath-test instruments in conformity with the standards in effect.

#### **1.2.2.3 Public Information and Education**

Governments should provide regular awareness and information campaigns to alert the public about the consequences of alcohol consumption, especially on driving; and provide information on the existing laws concerning drinking and driving, the penalties for driving under the influence of alcohol, and the measures that can be taken to prevent drinking and driving. Such informational campaigns can also be used to create social norms that alcohol-impaired driving is unacceptable. In addition, to provide a general deterrent effect, Governments should regularly publicize police enforcement activities to combat alcohol-impaired driving.

Schools should include in their curriculum information about the effects of alcohol and the dangers of driving under the influence of alcohol. Moreover, driving schools for new drivers should provide similar information on the effects of alcohol on perceptual and motor skills and reasoning, as well as the dangers of drinking and driving and what can be done to prevent drinking and driving.

Governments should discourage advertisements for alcoholic beverages along roads and during mass participation events.

#### 1.2.2.4 Programmes

Governments should encourage employers to implement programmes and policies making any behaviour associated with drinking and driving by their employees unacceptable. In addition, Governments should formulate broad-based programmes to change attitudes and social norms about drinking and driving. These may include programmes to support alcohol server intervention and designated driver programmes at establishments serving alcoholic beverages. Governments should work with competent bodies to ensure that a discussion on the risks of driving under the influence of alcohol is included in the driver's manual and questions on the risks of driving under the influence of alcohol are included on the driver's license examination.

#### 1.2.2.5 Assessment and rehabilitation

Governments should ensure the accessibility of effective assessment and treatment, as well as rehabilitation services with trained personnel, for all drunk-driving offenders, but especially for habitual offenders and those addicted to alcohol. License re-instatement should be linked to successful completion of the appropriate alcohol rehabilitation programme.

Moreover, Governments should consider programmes **incorporating** alcohol interlock ignition **devices**, at least for repeat or habitual alcohol-impaired driving offenders, and perhaps for all drunk-driving offenders. Participation in **such a** programme **could** be a condition for license re-instatement. Governments should also consider the use of alcohol interlocks on commercial vehicles (e.g., heavy goods, dangerous goods and buses). **However, the use of such systems still needs further scientific and political evaluation.**

#### 1.2.2.6 Research and data

Governments should conduct research and support data collection to assess the role of alcohol in road accidents, as well as the economic and social costs of alcohol-related collisions. Data should include coroner data; hospital data on injuries; roadside surveys of alcohol use among drivers; police data on BAC test results and arrests; convictions and sanctions imposed; and surveys of public knowledge, attitudes and self-reported impaired driving. Specific research should focus on identifying the populations at risk for alcohol-impaired driving to better target policies and programmes for reducing impaired driving. Governments should undertake evaluation of programme activities to establish the effectiveness, including cost effectiveness, of different policies, programmes and strategies.

#### **1.2.2.7 Partnerships**

Governments should formulate policies and programmes, at the national and international level, involving all the sectors in preventing drinking and driving. These sectors include law, law enforcement, health and medical, education, insurance, media, private sector companies, victims' organizations, employers, road user groups, and any other sector that can be effective in developing policies and programmes to reduce drinking and driving.

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