

Drunk Driving

Drunk driving and fatalities

According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, almost one-third of drivers convicted of driving while intoxicated (DWI) had previous DWI convictions. Many of these crashes resulted in a death. If you have been previously convicted of a DWI, there's a good chance that you could be convicted again, and a good chance that you will be involved in a crash resulting in a fatality.

What are the legal and financial consequences of repeat DWI convictions?

Many states have enacted laws that impose harsh legal and financial consequences on drivers with previous DWI convictions. These consequences include the following:

- suspension or revocation of driver's license
- impounding of the driver's vehicle
- installation of an ignition interlock system that prevents the vehicle from starting if the driver's blood alcohol level is above a predetermined limit
- an imposed alcohol assessment, which may result in a requirement to get treatment
- a mandatory minimum prison sentence or a community service sentence

How can you avoid driving while intoxicated?

Many people in early recovery relapse when they put themselves in a high-risk situation without realizing or preparing for it. That's why it's so important to identify dangerous situations.

If you're not sure if a situation is high risk, talk to your sponsor or others in recovery for guidance. If you can't avoid a high-risk situation, give yourself permission to leave if it becomes threatening or uncomfortable. You don't need to test yourself in the presence of alcohol or other drugs. You've taken that test before. You may have escaped without relapse before, but in the end the risk is never worth the potential outcome. Sometimes even an event or situation that

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seems safe can turn out to be dangerous. Before you attend any event or get into an unknown situation, give yourself permission to leave when you need to.

Make sure you have reliable transportation or a method to leave right away, if that's what you need to do. You may not have driving privileges as a consequence of your chemical use. But you can still avoid being trapped at an event by talking to your sponsor beforehand or making sure a friend can pick you up.

Develop a relapse prevention plan to make sure you protect your ongoing recovery. This will also help protect against the harsh consequences of legal liability and lives lost that may result from driving under the influence.

Recovery Action Step

Create a relapse prevention plan by answering these questions:

1. What are some of the high-risk situations you know you will encounter?
2. How will you manage these situations?
3. Which people can help you identify and prepare for these high-risk situations?

Discuss your answers with your sponsor and recovery support group. They will help you create a plan to deal with these situations and negative emotions.

Web resources

MADD

MADD is a nonprofit organization with more than six hundred chapters nationwide. Its mission is to stop drunk driving, support the victims of this violent crime, and prevent underage drinking. MADD's website offers a search tool to find state-by-state laws on alcohol consumption and driving. If you are a victim of drunk driving in need of assistance, please call MADD's toll-free help line.