

DON'T DRINK & DRIVE

Saskatchewan to toughen drinking and driving laws

Saskatchewan has some of the toughest laws in the country when it comes to drinking and driving, and they're about to get tougher yet. Thanks to some proposed amendments to the province's Traffic Safety Act.

Under the amendments, any driver who fails a standard field sobriety test, or SFST, due to alcohol or drug impairment will receive an immediate 24-hour licence suspension, as will drivers who refuse to take the test. Under current legislation drivers can refuse to take an SFST without consequence.

The test is administered at the roadside by police officers to help them determine whether or not a person's ability to drive is impaired. It includes the walk and turn test and the one-leg stand test. The officer also checks the person for involuntary movement of

the eyes.

"The SFST is considered one of the best methods of identifying impaired drivers and it will help law enforcement to take more drinking drivers off the road," said Maynard Sonntag, minister responsible for Saskatchewan Government Insurance, which spearheaded the amendments to the act.

Another proposed amendment would see a 15-day driver's licence suspension for drivers after a second .04 blood alcohol content violation within a five-year period.

Under current legislation, a driver receives a 24-hour licence suspension for a first .04 violation. A second violation within a five-year period nets them another 24-hour suspension and they must attend a Drive Without Impairment (DWI) course.

The requirement to attend a DWI course will remain in place for a second violation under the amended act.

The proposed amendments will not have any effect on new drivers in the graduated licence program. Those drivers cannot consume any amount of alcohol before driving. A new driver found in violation will receive a 30-day licence suspension for their first violation and will be required to attend a DWI course. Any further violations within a five-year period will mean additional 30-day suspensions and a requirement that the driver complete addiction screening.

The amendments to the act have the support of the Saskatchewan Association of Chiefs of Police (SACP).

"Legislation that increases the consequences and therefore the deterrence of

driving while impaired by any drug, including alcohol, is welcomed by the SACP and its member agencies," said SACP president Terry G. Coleman. "The well-researched SFST is an excellent addition to the tools we have as police officers

to work in behalf of our communities to ensure we all get home safely and in good health."

The proposed amendments will come into force when the Traffic Safety Act is proclaimed in 2006.

Red ribbons remind drivers to make the responsible choice

While the number of people killed each year on Saskatchewan roads due to alcohol-related collisions is on the decline, drinking and driving is still a major problem.

According to statistics from Saskatchewan Government Insurance, alcohol continues to be the number one contributing factor in fatal vehicle crashes in the province. Alcohol is cited as a factor in 40 per cent of fatal collisions and in 10 per cent of collisions where someone is injured.

A number of organizations across the country are working to get the message out that drinking and driving kills. Students Against Drinking and Driving (SADD) Saskatchewan is a student-led organization with school-based chapters operating across Saskatchewan.

The goal of the organization is to work to reduce the number of people killed each year in the province as a result of impaired driving by educating people about the dangers of drinking and driving and by lobbying for changes in legislation and public policy as they relate to drinking and driving.

Each year SADD Saskatchewan holds a red ribbon campaign to draw attention to the problem of drinking and driving, with more than 70,000 ribbons handed out across the province annually. The ribbons are designed to be attached to a car aerial or mirror to serve as a visual reminder to make the responsible choice to not drink and drive. This year's red ribbon campaign was launched at the end of November.

Mothers Against Drunk Driving, or MADD, is another organization dedicated to tackling the problem of drinking and driving.

Like SADD Saskatchewan, MADD Canada also has an annual red ribbon campaign. This is the 18th year the organization has held its Project Red Ribbon campaign, running from the beginning of November until Jan. 2, 2006.

Throughout the campaign, MADD Canada volunteers across the country distribute the ribbons and ask people to "Be

One on for Safety" by tying the ribbons to a visible location on their vehicle or on a key chain. More than four million people across the country are expected to tie on a ribbon during this year's campaign, both as a sign of respect for those who have been killed or injured as a result of impaired driving, and as a personal commitment to not drink and drive.



**DRINKING AND DRIVING
DON'T MIX**
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Christmas
and Happy New
Year. Please think
before you drink and
drive this holiday season.*

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