

Lower Blood Alcohol Limit Proposed for Drivers

The nation's top safety agency has recommended that states sharply lower the legal alcohol limit for drivers.

CHICAGO, IL, US, August 7, 2013 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The National Transportation Safety Board said that states should lower the blood alcohol limit for drivers to 0.05 percent, down from the current 0.08 percent. The agency said the change would reduce alcohol-related traffic fatalities.

"There is no question that many deaths and injuries are caused by drivers who are impaired by alcohol but are not over the current legal limit," said Robert Briskman, a Chicago car accident attorney.

In all 50 states, the current legal limit is 0.08 percent for drivers 21 years of age and older, with stricter laws applying to drivers under the legal drinking age of 21. The transportation safety board has no authority over the states, but its recommendation carries weight with state lawmakers. A different federal agency, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, can encourage states to adopt certain safety laws by offering federal funding incentives, but the agency has so far not indicated that it will do so in this case.

In Illinois, Secretary of State Jesse White said that further study would be required before a change is made. State Rep. Dennis Reboletti, an Elmhurst Republican, who favors tougher drunk-driving legislation, said that a task force should be appointed to determine whether the limit should be lowered.

The transportation safety board said that driving while intoxicated causes 10,000 deaths annually, or 30 percent of all traffic fatalities. More than 14 percent of drivers in a national survey admitted to driving when they believed they were close to or over the legal limit. According to the transportation safety board, reducing the legal limit would cut the risk of accidents by half. Most other countries set a blood alcohol limit of 0.05 percent or less for drivers.

Supporters of the change point out that lower blood alcohol limits reduce traffic fatalities. Critics contend that a lower limit would stigmatize innocent drivers, and they point to studies that show that drivers are not statistically dangerous below a blood alcohol content of 0.14 percent. If the proposed change went into effect, it would be possible for some people to reach the legal limit with one drink.

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