

## TEN FACTS: What Canada's BAC Federal Legal Limit Means in Practical Terms

The current *Criminal Code* blood alcohol concentration (BAC) limit of 0.08% (80 mg. of alcohol per 100 ml of blood) allows individuals to drink excessive amounts of alcohol in a relatively short period of time and then drive, largely immune to criminal sanction. Here are ten facts all Canadians should know about the country's current federal legal limit.

1. The current BAC federal legal limit is 0.08% (80 mg. of alcohol per 100 ml. of blood). However, given the 0.02% BAC margin of error accepted by our courts, most police will not consider laying an impaired driving *Criminal Code* charge unless both the driver's evidentiary breathalyzers readings are 0.10% BAC or higher.
2. Based on this real-world threshold for criminal charges, an average 200 lb. man can drink over six bottles of regular beer (12 ounces at 5% alcohol by volume) or over a bottle of wine (26 ounces at 12% alcohol by volume) in a two-hour period and then drive without exceeding the real-world threshold for criminal charges.
3. An average 130 lb. woman can drink over three bottles of regular beer (12 ounces at 5% alcohol by volume) in a two-hour period and then drive without exceeding the real-world threshold for criminal charges.
4. Studies in laboratories, on driving simulators and on closed access roadways have established that significant impairment of critical driving skills, including vision, psychomotor tasks, reaction time, vigilance, information processing, and divided attention tasks, begins at levels well below 0.08% BAC.
5. The authors of a comprehensive study published by the American National Highway Traffic Safety Administration in 2000 stated that the 'major conclusion of this study is that a majority of the driving population is impaired in some important measures at BACs as low as 0.02%.'
6. As early as 1960, the British Medical Association stated that "a concentration of 50 mg of alcohol in 100 ml of blood while driving a motor vehicle is the highest that can be accepted as entirely consistent with the safety of other road users."
7. The impairment of driving-related skills is reflected in the research on the relative risk of crash. Canadian research relates that drivers with BACs in the 0.051% to 0.080% range are 7.2 times more likely to be involved in a fatal crash than drivers with a zero BAC.
8. The international trend has been to reduce legal BAC limits. The following countries already have a BAC limit of 0.05% BAC or lower: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Japan, Macedonia, Malaysia, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Slovenia, Sweden and Turkey.
9. Every jurisdiction that has lowered its BAC limit has experienced some traffic safety benefits, such as reduction in drinking and driving, and decrease in alcohol-related crashes, injuries and deaths.
10. A Canadian study, reviewing the international experience, reported the lowering the criminal BAC limit to 0.05% could result in reductions of 6% to 18% in total crash fatalities, or between 185 and 555 fatalities a year. The evidence clearly suggests that a lower *Criminal Code* BAC limit will contribute to significant traffic safety benefits for Canadians.

**For more information, call:  
Andrew Murie, MADD Canada's CEO**

**1-800-665-6233, ext. 224**