
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General

CANADA'S TOUGHEST IMPAIRED DRIVING PENALTIES START SEPT. 20

VICTORIA – Police across the province will be out in force in September armed with the toughest laws and penalties in the country to get impaired drivers off B.C.'s roads faster and for longer periods of time, Solicitor General Michael de Jong, QC, announced today.

“Unfortunately, impaired driving is on the increase in this province and that's alarming because it means some people still aren't getting the message,” said de Jong. “The new penalties will be a wake-up call because when September comes, drinking drivers can lose their driver's licence, have their vehicle impounded, and pay costs that range from \$600 to \$3,750.”

Drivers who provide a failing breath sample above 0.08 per cent blood-alcohol content (BAC) or refuse to provide a breath sample at the roadside will face an immediate, 90-day driving ban and a \$500 fine. As well, they will have their vehicle impounded for 30 days. Criminal charges may also be laid.

“This summer, our officers are out on the streets, working strategically to identify and stop impaired drivers and, where appropriate, vigorously pursue criminal charges,” said Deputy Chief Constable Clayton Pecknold, president of the BC Association of Chiefs of Police. “The new law will build on these efforts. In the long run, with tougher penalties and ongoing enforcement, we believe there will be fewer impaired drivers to catch and fewer devastating, completely preventable crashes for our police officers to attend.”

Drivers caught once in the “warn” range (between 0.05 and 0.08 per cent BAC) in a five-year period will face an immediate, three-day driving ban and a \$200 fine; a second time, a seven-day ban and a \$300 fine; and a third time, a 30-day ban and a \$400 fine. Research shows a BAC in that range means a driver is seven times more likely to be in a fatal crash than if they have no alcohol in their body.

In addition, drivers who blow once in the “fail” range, or three times within five years in the “warn” range, will be required to participate in the rehabilitative Responsible Driver Program. They must also use an ignition interlock device, which tests a driver's breath for alcohol every time they operate their vehicle, for one year.

In recent years, B.C. has seen a rise in impaired driving offences, which went up 18 per cent from 2008 to 2009, according to information released last week by the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics. On average, alcohol-related crashes cause 115 deaths and more than 3,000 injuries in B.C. each year.

More information on B.C.'s new impaired driving penalties is at www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/osmv/

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