

A Safer Naper – Drug and Alcohol Awareness May 2023

This month, the Naperville Police Department turns the focus of its Safer Naper campaign to the dangers of impaired driving. From weddings and graduations to outdoor barbecues, May kicks off a season filled with social events that could involve the consumption of alcohol or recreational cannabis.

We want to encourage all Naperville residents to celebrate responsibly this spring and summer! Recent reports from the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) find that alcohol and cannabis are the primary substances detected in impaired drivers. By educating you about these substances and the laws governing them, we hope to encourage residents of all ages to make good choices and refrain from dangerous (and potentially deadly) behaviors.

Section 1 – Know the Law

Driving Under the Influence

“Driving Under the Influence” is defined as operating a motor vehicle while impaired by alcohol, other drugs, including cannabis prescribed for medical purposes, or intoxicating compounds and methamphetamine. In Illinois, drivers are legally considered to be under the influence if they:

1. have a blood-alcohol concentration (BAC) of .08 or more;
2. have a delta-9 tetrahydrocannabinol (cannabis) concentration (THC) of either 5 nanograms or more per milliliter of whole blood or 10 nanograms or more per milliliter of other bodily substance;
3. have used any other controlled substance; or
4. are impaired by medication.

Illegal Transportation

It is unlawful for any person to transport, carry, possess, or have any alcoholic liquor within the passenger area of any motor vehicle except in the original container and with the seal unbroken. Similarly, it is illegal to possess or transport medical or recreational cannabis in the passenger area of a motor vehicle except in a sealed, odor-proof and child-resistant medical or recreational cannabis container.

Underage Consumption

Illinois law prohibits the consumption of alcoholic liquor by any person under 21 years of age except under the direct supervision and approval of the person’s parent(s) in the privacy of a home or during a religious ceremony.

Under Illinois' Zero Tolerance Law, a driver under the age of 21 caught with any trace of alcohol in his/her system will lose his/her driving privileges.

The summaries noted above are a sampling of laws regulating the use of alcohol and cannabis in Illinois. This is not a comprehensive list, nor is it meant to be used as a legal interpretation of any laws or ordinances.

Section 2 – Impacts of Drugs and Alcohol

How Alcohol Impacts Your Driving Skills

When alcohol is in your system, it affects how quickly you are able to respond to different situations. Drinking slows your response time, which can increase the likelihood of an accident. Drivers use their hands, eyes and feet to control the car; but their hands, eyes and feet must be controlled by their brains. Safe driving requires being alert and able to make quick decisions in rapidly-changing situations. Drinking alcohol can have a profound effect on driving skills:

- **Reaction time.** Alcohol can slow reflexes, which can decrease the ability to react swiftly to changing situations.
- **Vision.** Alcohol can slow eye muscle function, alter eye movement and impact visual perception, possibly resulting in blurred vision. Night vision and color perception also can be impaired.
- **Tracking.** Alcohol can decrease the ability to judge the car's position on the road or the location of other vehicles, the center line or road signs.
- **Concentration.** Alcohol may cause attention to driving to decrease and/or drowsiness to occur.
- **Comprehension.** Alcohol can hinder the ability to make rational decisions.
- **Coordination.** Reduced eye/hand/foot coordination can be caused by drinking too much alcohol.

How Marijuana Impacts Your Driving Skills

Driving under the influence of drugs, including marijuana, is also dangerous and illegal. Driving is a complex task that requires your full attention to stay safe and alert. Marijuana affects areas of the brain that control your body's movements, balance, coordination, memory, and judgment. Marijuana use can impair important skills required for safe driving by:

- slowing your reaction time and ability to make decisions,
- impairing coordination, and
- distorting perception.

Underage Drinking

According to [research compiled](#) by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), drinking by those below the age of 21 is strongly linked with

- Death from alcohol poisoning.
- Unintentional injuries such as car crashes, falls, burns and drowning.
- Suicide and violence, such as fighting and sexual assault.
- Changes in brain development.
- School performance problems, such as higher absenteeism and poor or failing grades.
- Alcohol dependence later in life.
- Other risk behaviors such as smoking, abuse of other drugs and risky sexual behaviors.

Excessive drinking also contributes to more than 3,900 deaths among people below the age of 21 in the United States each year, according to the CDC.

Section 3 – Making Good Choices

Planning ahead and making good choices regarding consumption is critical. The best way to stop impaired driving is by preventing people who are under the influence from ever getting behind the wheel. Do not drive if you are under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

- Plan your safe ride home before you start the party. Designate a non-drinking person as a designated driver so they can safely drive friends or family home.
- If someone you know has been drinking or consuming cannabis, do not let that person get behind the wheel. Take their keys and help them arrange a sober ride home.
- Rideshare services, taxis, or public transportation offer a convenient transportation option that helps reduce the risk of impaired driving crashes.
- If you're hosting a party where alcohol will be served, make sure all guests leave with a sober driver.
- Always wear your seat belt — it's your best defense against impaired drivers.
- If you see an impaired driver on the road call 911. Your actions could help save someone's life.

The bottom line is if you or someone you know has been drinking or using drugs, do not get behind the wheel. If you see an impaired driver on the road call 911. Your actions could save someone's life.

Tips for Parents of Teens Attending a Party

- Know where your teen will be.
 - Obtain the address and phone number of the party host.
 - Let your teen know you expect a phone call if the location of the party is changed.
 - (Tip: Have your teen take a selfie with an adult at the party and send it to you).
- Contact the parents of the teen giving the party.
 - Verify the occasion.
 - Be sure that a parent will be present.
 - Offer assistance.
- Communicate concerns.
 - Discuss with your teen the possible situations that might arise at parties with other teenagers.
 - Let them know where you can be reached.
 - Assure your teenager that you, or a specified friend or neighbor can be called if needed.
 - Agree on an acceptable curfew.
 - Wait up until your teen comes home and check in with them, so you can see, hear and smell any concerns.
- Verify overnight arrangements, whether planned or spontaneous.

Tips for Parents of Teens Hosting a Party

- Parents must be present during the party. No parents, no party! As parents, we have a parental as well as legal responsibility to our children to see that parties are conducted in a safe manner.
- Set ground rules with your teen beforehand.
 - Let your teen know your expectations.
 - Give your children options while establishing parameters.

- Discuss the risks of and a plan for any underage use of tobacco, alcohol or other drugs, should they occur.
- Remind your kids that they are accountable for their own behavior.
- Set limits.
 - Make a guest list in an effort to discourage uninvited guests.
 - Establish a specific starting and ending time.
- Know your responsibilities. It is important that we understand our liability, as parents, for both criminal charges and for monetary damages in case of a civil lawsuit where drugs and/or alcohol are used on our own private property. Therefore:
 - Be alert to the signs of alcohol or drug use.
 - Be aware of guests who leave the party and then return. Experience shows that in many instances these people have left the party with the intent of drinking or using drugs.
 - If you feel that despite your precautions things do get out of hand (i.e., loud music or disruptive behavior), please do not hesitate to call 911 for assistance from the police.
 - If you find any persons under the influence, call their family so that they can be safely transported home.
- Other ideas:
 - Have plenty of food and non-alcoholic drinks available.
 - Try to meet your teen's friends and their parents.

Section 4 – Additional Resources

- [Driving Under the Influence](#) (Illinois Secretary of State)
- [DUI Fact Book](#) (Illinois Secretary of State)
- [Impaired Driving](#) (CDC)
- [Drug-Impaired Driving](#) (NHTSA)
- [Drunk Driving](#) (NHTSA)
- [Liquor and Tobacco Control](#) (Naperville Municipal Code)
- [Hosting Parties and the Laws: A Practical Guide for Parents](#) (The Power of Choice)