



IMPAIRED DRIVING

JUNE 2026

LENGTH 2–5 minutes

TO PREPARE Read the background information.

Bring the company's policy on drug and alcohol use for reference.

BACKGROUND

- Driver alcohol use remains a leading cause of fatal vehicle crashes, involved in **29% of fatal crashes**.
- Studies have found that being under the influence of opioids while driving can **double** your risk of having a crash.
- Alcohol and prescription drugs, not just illegal drugs, should be included in safety talks about impaired driving.

DISCUSSION

- **Impairment** can be caused by:
 - chemical factors, such as legal or illegal substances;
 - physical factors, like fatigue; and
 - psychosocial factors, like mental distress and chronic stress.
- Impairment is not just about substance abuse.



When we talk about *impairment*, what do you think it means?

- **Impairment** refers to *anything* that could impede one's ability to function normally or safely, regardless of cause.
- **A person's abilities** are affected by alcohol, illegal drugs such as cocaine and marijuana, and prescription and over-the-counter drugs.
- **Impairment from alcohol can begin with the first drink.** Your gender, body weight, the number of drinks you have consumed and the amount of food you have eaten affect your body's ability to handle alcohol.
 - Two or three beers in an hour can make some people legally intoxicated.



TRAFFIC SAFETY Huddle

- Women, younger people and smaller people generally become impaired with less alcohol.



What abilities change when someone is impaired?

- Driving abilities such as **making decisions, reaction time, depth perception** and **coordination** can all be affected by drugs, alcohol, fatigue and mental distress.
- The first ability affected by alcohol is **judgment**.
 - For some people, it only takes one drink to impact decision-making.



How do you respond if you believe a co-worker is impaired?

Ensure that all huddle participants know your company policies and where to access them.

- If the co-worker is in immediate danger from impairment, or about to get behind the wheel, get help. Call 911 if necessary.
- If impairment is observed and the co-worker is not in immediate danger:
 - Know and follow company policies regarding how to address employee impairment. If you don't know the policy—remedy that now.
 - Discuss concerns with a supervisor.

SUMMARY

- Impairment is not just about alcohol and drugs. Impairment, defined as anything that could impede one's ability to function normally or safely, can have many causes.
- Know what drugs you are using (prescription and over-the-counter), how they affect you and what your company policies are so you can work and drive safely.
- Planning is important when you are going to drink alcohol. Have a plan and be ready to change plans if the situation changes. Your safety is still the most important goal.