

QuickSmarts

Drink Driving



Drink driving is one of the major killers on Queensland roads.

On average, 57 people are killed and more than 834 seriously injured each year on Queensland roads as a result of drink driving¹. Drinking alcohol reduces our ability to drive safely.

Alcohol affects judgement, vision, coordination and reflexes, and increases the risk of crashing.

The facts

- In Queensland, Learner, Provisional and Probationary Licence holders are not permitted to drive after drinking any alcohol. They must have a zero blood/breath alcohol concentration (BAC) limit.
- Open licence holders must have a BAC lower than 0.05. The same applies for supervisors of car and motorcycle Learner drivers.
- The following licence holders must also maintain a zero BAC when driving:
 - any vehicle weighing over 4.5 tonnes or an articulated motor vehicle (eg B-double or road train)
 - a bus built to carry more than 12 adults, including the driver
 - a vehicle carrying a placard load of dangerous goods
 - a taxi, limousine or public passenger vehicle
 - a tow truck, pilot or escort vehicle escorting an oversized vehicle
 - a vehicle being used by a driver trainer to give driver training or a specially constructed vehicle (including a tractor and motorcycle)
 - a class RE licence holder in their first year of riding
- 11% of drivers get behind the wheel when they know they may be over the legal alcohol limit, and 21% drive the next morning when they're possibly over the legal limit².

The effects of alcohol on driving

Drinking alcohol can affect drivers and driving performance by:

- slowing down reaction time — crucial in an emergency situation
- making it difficult to multi-task — an essential skill for safe driving and motorcycle Learner drivers
- causing poor judgement — affecting your ability to judge distance and speed
- reducing attention span — so we don't notice other drivers and/or vehicles
- affecting vision and hearing — reducing our ability to identify driving hazards
- creating over-confidence — we may feel more confident after a few drinks but in fact, we're less able to cope with unexpected events. We might take risks that we normally wouldn't.

References:

1. Department of Transport and Main Roads (2026). Figures are based on the crashes validated in the Queensland Road Crash Information System from 1 January 2020 – 31 December 2024 for lives lost, and 1 January 2020 – 31 December 2024 for serious injuries. Data extracted January 2026.
2. Footprints Market Research, Driver Attitudes & Behaviour State-wide Research, December 2025.



Why no alcohol is safer when it comes to driving

Blood/breath alcohol concentration (BAC) is a measure of the amount of alcohol in the body. Even at 0.05, studies show reactions are slower than at 0.0 BAC.

It's difficult to accurately monitor how much alcohol we consume due to:

- the different size and shape of glasses
- different alcohol content for each type of drink (wine/beer/spirits)
- different volumes typically poured for each type of drink
- gradual alcohol impairment (the more we drink, the less accurate your guesses become about the amount of alcohol consumed).

It's also important to remember that BAC may continue to rise after we stop drinking. It's why we shouldn't rely on the result from a breath-testing machine in a hotel. Other variables that affect your BAC include weight, gender, metabolism, how often you drink, and how long since you have eaten. Coffee, sleep, vomiting or exercise will not reduce your BAC.

The only thing that reduces your BAC is time.

Plan ahead and stay safe

If you're going to drink, make arrangements to get home safely and avoid driving the morning after. Consider these options:

- Stay at a friend's place rather than drive
- Leave the car at home and consider alternative transport such as a taxi, ride share, courtesy bus, pre-arranged lift or public transport
- Designate a 'dry driver' if going out with others
- If hosting at your house, provide non-alcoholic drink options and plenty of food, offer guests somewhere to stay overnight rather than drive home, or call a taxi or ride share for them. Remember they may still be over the limit the next morning.
- If you're walking after drinking, walk with a sober friend or group, stay on the footpath, and only cross the road at marked crossings or under a street light where you're clearly visible to motorists.

Drinking and riding

Drink driving laws also apply to personal mobility device (PMD, including e-scooters and e-skateboards) and bike (including e-bikes) riders.

- Police may test riders on roads, footpaths, shared paths and in public places.
- It is illegal to ride with a BAC of 0.05 or above.
- Riders with an illegal BAC up to 0.149 may be issued a penalty infringement notice, and riders with a higher BAC will be required to attend court.
- There are no licence sanctions for drink riding on a PMD or bicycle, however, riders caught above the limit will not be able to ride for the following 8 hours.

Drinking and boating

It is important to remember that the same rules apply when operating vessels on the water.

This means:

- The Skipper on any recreational or commercial vessel (other than a vessel carrying or authorised to carry more than 12 passengers) must have a BAC lower than 0.05
- The Skipper on any passenger commercial vessel carrying or authorised to carry more than 12 passengers must have a BAC of zero
- The Skipper is also responsible for the safety of passengers and their alcohol consumption

The effects of alcohol and drugs can be increased on the water from the sun, heat, wind, waves and constant motion. Reflexes and response times in emergencies are slowed and swimming ability may be reduced.

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information

