Alberta’s new drinking and driving law

In December, the Alberta government passed Bill 26, the *Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2011.*

The new, comprehensive impaired driving legislation aims to prevent drivers who drink from getting behind the wheel through enforcement balanced with education, prevention and monitoring. The goal is to keep families safe on Alberta’s roads by reducing collisions, and needless deaths and injuries.

The legislation targets high-risk groups, like repeat offenders and drivers who exceed the .08 blood-alcohol limit under the Criminal Code. The new law also includes progressive sanctions for drivers in the .05 to .08 range.

Here’s a summary of what has changed under the new legislation:

**Drivers with Criminal Code charges (blood alcohol content over .08)**

**Current**
- Immediate 24 hour licence suspension followed by
- 21 day grace period followed by
- 90 day licence suspension
- 6 month ignition interlock mandatory for repeat offences and most serious offences

**New**
- First conviction - Immediate licence suspension sustained until the criminal charge is resolved, 3 day vehicle seizure
- Second and subsequent convictions - Immediate licence suspension sustained until the criminal charge is resolved, 7 day vehicle seizure
- Addictions assessment may be required.
- Mandatory use of ignition interlock device after criminally convicted of impaired driving:
  - First conviction - 1 year
  - Second conviction - 3 years
  - Third and subsequent convictions - 5 years

**Drivers with blood alcohol content from .05 up to .08**

**Current**
- 24 hour licence suspension

**New**
- First offence - Immediate 3 day licence suspension, 3 day vehicle seizure
- Second offence - Immediate 15 day licence suspension, 7 day vehicle seizure, remedial course, may be required to attend a hearing with the Alberta Transportation Safety Board
- Third and subsequent offences - Immediate 30 day licence suspension, 7 day vehicle seizure, remedial course, mandatory hearing with the Alberta Transportation Safety Board

**Regulatory changes under the Graduated Drivers Licensing Program**

**Current**
- Immediate 24 hour licence suspension followed by
- 7-day grace period followed by
- 30 day licence suspension

**New**
- First and subsequent offences - 30 day licence suspension is now immediate, 7 day vehicle seizure
Drinking and driving imposes an enormous cost. The true cost is the victims – those killed and injured by impaired drivers, and their families and communities who suffer these tragic and preventable losses. From 2006 to 2010 in Alberta, 569 people died and 8530 people were injured in alcohol-related crashes. In 2010 alone, 96 people were killed and 1284 were injured.

Along with Alberta, eight other Canadian jurisdictions have passed laws imposing tougher penalties for drivers with blood alcohol between .05 and .08. Saskatchewan now starts at .04.

Before the new law comes into effect, an education and awareness campaign will help to inform Albertans about the changes and encourage personal responsibility behind the wheel. For more information go to: www.alberta.ca.