

## Impairment

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### What is driver impairment?

To impair is to damage or weaken. Therefore, impaired driving is faulty driving or sub-optimal driving. Certain types of impairment are easier to measure than others. Ordinary drivers may be more familiar with some types of impairment over others.

### Alcohol

In Australia, most drivers are familiar with the link between the consumption of alcohol and crash risk. A driver at .05% BAC (blood alcohol content) is about twice as likely to crash as ordinary drivers. A driver at .1% BAC is about 7 times more likely to crash.

### Drugs

Science is showing that drugs, both legal (prescription) and illegal (illicit), are just about as likely to be involved in crashes as alcohol. Many drivers fail to consider the cumulative affects of combined drugs, or drugs and alcohol.

### Fatigue

Fatigue has long been known to impair driver performance. Yet despite massive advertising campaigns, drivers continue to crash and report fatigue as a contributing factor. There are several factors that can lead to a fatigue related crash. There is a separate fact sheet dealing specifically with driver fatigue.

### Distraction

Most experienced drivers can recall times when they have been distracted. Drivers may also explain how being distracted lead to a 'close call' or 'near miss'. Still, drivers continue to create the circumstances where they allow themselves to become distracted.

The use of mobile (smart) phones while driving is an established distracter. Many people underestimate how risky using a mobile phone can be. Studies show that talking on a mobile phone can increase your crash risk from between 4 to 9 times. A common error is that holding the phone creates the crash risk. This is not so. Simply talking on the phone creates the distraction, not holding the phone. The distraction has been shown to last up to 10 minutes after the call has finished.

### Technology

Many new and emerging technologies are designed to ease the burden of drivers. However, any technology that encourages a driver to concentrate less, could be called a distracter. In this way, even 'Sat-Nav' devices (satellite assisted navigation) may prove to have a negative safety effect over time.

Fact  
Sheet

