

# Chapter 5



## Operating Under the Influence (Alcohol and Drugs)

Clearly times have changed regarding how society feels about drinking and driving in Maine. The decrease in alcohol-related fatalities reflects this changing attitude. More people are driving more miles but fewer people are involved in crashes where drinking and driving was reported.

### Statewide

Over the past several years, the number of alcohol-related fatalities in the state of Maine has decreased considerably. The percentage of alcohol-related fatalities to all crash fatalities prior to 1987 was over 50%. Since that time, the percentage of alcohol-related fatalities has been lower each year. The Fatal Analysis Reporting System established by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) indicates that any positive blood alcohol level is considered an alcohol related fatality. This includes the driver and pedestrian only. Passengers with positive blood alcohol levels are not counted. Since 1997 the percentage of alcohol-related fatalities has been less than 30% of all fatalities. In 2002 there were 42 alcohol related fatalities, 19% of all fatalities.

The number of arrests for operating under the influence of liquor (OUI) has fluctuated between 9,000 to 11,000 a year since 1991. Federal OUI grant programs have been made available to law enforcement agencies on a yearly basis over the past several years, due to Maine's OUI Laws. These programs are enforcement driven, to arrest violators for operating under the influence of alcohol.

### Comparison with National Trends

A national study conducted by NHTSA in 2002 estimates alcohol-related fatalities are 41% of the total fatalities. This percentage rose slightly from 2001. Alcohol-related crash fatalities predominantly

- Occurred at night and on weekends;
- Involved drivers between the ages of 21-24;
- Were the highest for motorcycle operators.

More than 1/3 of all pedestrian fatalities were alcohol related. NHTSA stated that about 1.4 million people were arrested for operating under the influence of alcohol/drugs in 2001. The arrest rate is one out of 137 licensed drivers. In 2002, 35% of all traffic fatalities occurred in crashes where at least one driver or non-occupant had a BAC of 0.08% or greater.



## Maine Motor Vehicle Crash Data and Alcohol Involvement From 1976-2003

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total Crashes</u>	<u>Total Fatal Crashes</u>	<u>Total Fatalities</u>	<u>Alcohol-Related Fatalities</u>
1976	30,147	201	227	136 (59.9%)
1977	32,183	200	218	131 (60.1%)
1978	32,719	212	245	147 (60%)
1979	29,577	203	239	140 (58.6%)
1980	27,910	234	261	157 (60.2%)
1981	26,698	186	211	127 (60.2%)
1982	30,522	151	166	84 (50.6%)
1983	31,375	198	224	127 (56.7%)
1984	34,544	211	232	125 (53.9%)
1985	36,799	189	206	110 (53.4%)
1986	40,378	190	214	108 (50.5%)
1987	43,201	212	232	114 (49.1%)
1988	40,764	231	256	89 (34.8%)
1989	43,498	175	190	61 (32.1%)
1990	37,468	196	213	81 (38%)
1991	35,046	181	205	73 (35.6%)
1992	35,548	189	214	85 (39.7%)
1993	37,819	168	185	74 (40%)
1994	37,561	167	189	65 (34.4%)
1995	38,512	171	188	51 (27.1%)
1996	39,760	156	169	55 (32.5%)
1997	42,510	172	192	63 (32.8%)
1998	40,877	176	192	50 (26%)
1999	39,024	168	181	51 (28.2%)
2000	37,251	159	169	46 (27.2%)
2001	37,580	170	192	49 (25.5%)
2002	36,979	186	216	42 (19.4%)

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Source: FARS Data and Maine Department of Transportation