



Oregon

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TO: Members of GAC – DUII

FROM: Marie Dodds
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AAA Oregon/Idaho

DATE: November 3, 2023

SUBJECT: Liaison Report from AAA Oregon/Idaho

SIGNIFICANT REPORT ITEMS

AAA Oregon/Idaho is beginning our holiday messaging about impaired driving, reminding drivers to never get behind the wheel when they are impaired. We are also reminding drivers that even though recreational use of marijuana is legal, it doesn't mean that cannabis is ok to use before driving.

Cannabis use can cause driver impairment. This drug can inhibit concentration, slow reaction times, and cloud judgment. Results vary by individual, but most published research suggests that driving within 1-2 hours after the use of cannabis may increase your risk of a crash. Mixing alcohol and cannabis may produce effects even more significant than either drug on its own. AAA urges all motorists to avoid driving while impaired. If you want to get high, don't drive. And if you're going to drive, don't get high.

AAA reminds drivers that Just because a drug is legal or recommended by a doctor does not mean it is safe to use while operating a motor vehicle. If you get behind the wheel while impaired, you put yourself, your passengers, and others on the road at risk. Suppose you are using cannabis for medical purposes. In that case, AAA recommends that you talk to your healthcare provider about the potential dangers of driving after using this drug, just as for any prescribed medication.

The best available research suggests alcohol and cannabis use can impair critical driving functions. However, alcohol and cannabis affect driving ability in different ways. For example, alcohol impairs psychomotor functions like divided attention, hazard perception, reaction time, and hand-eye coordination. Alcohol also appears to impair tasks requiring conscious effort more than "automatic" tasks.

Cannabis use also affects psychomotor functions such as attention, reaction time, and coordination but generally appears to affect automated or routine driving more than tasks requiring conscious effort. Alcohol and active THC impair a person when they reach the fatty tissues of the brain. While alcohol levels in the blood mirror those in the brain, the same is not valid for cannabis. That's why we can predict crash risk using blood to measure alcohol concentration, but we cannot do the same for cannabis because there is no reliable way to test the concentration of THC in the brain.

NOTEWORTHY DATA OR STATISTICS

According to the latest AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety's Traffic Safety Culture Index, approximately 94% of drivers believe driving after drinking enough alcohol (to the point one considers they might be over the legal limit) is very or extremely dangerous. Only 7% of respondents reported engaging in this behavior in the past 30 days.

In contrast to alcohol, only 65% of drivers felt driving within an hour after consuming cannabis to be very or extremely dangerous. And 5% told AAA they recently drove within an hour of consuming cannabis – 18% more than the year before.

Find out more about this and other research at the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety website:

<https://aaafoundation.org/>

UPCOMING PROJECTS OR EVENTS

In addition to continuing its research to understand drug-impaired driving better, AAA educates the public through member publications, newsletters, news media, social media channels, and online platforms to raise awareness and understanding.

AAA clubs also urge state policymakers to strengthen laws to help fight substance-impaired driving and get more police officers trained as Drug Recognition Experts (DRE) to recognize drug impairment.