

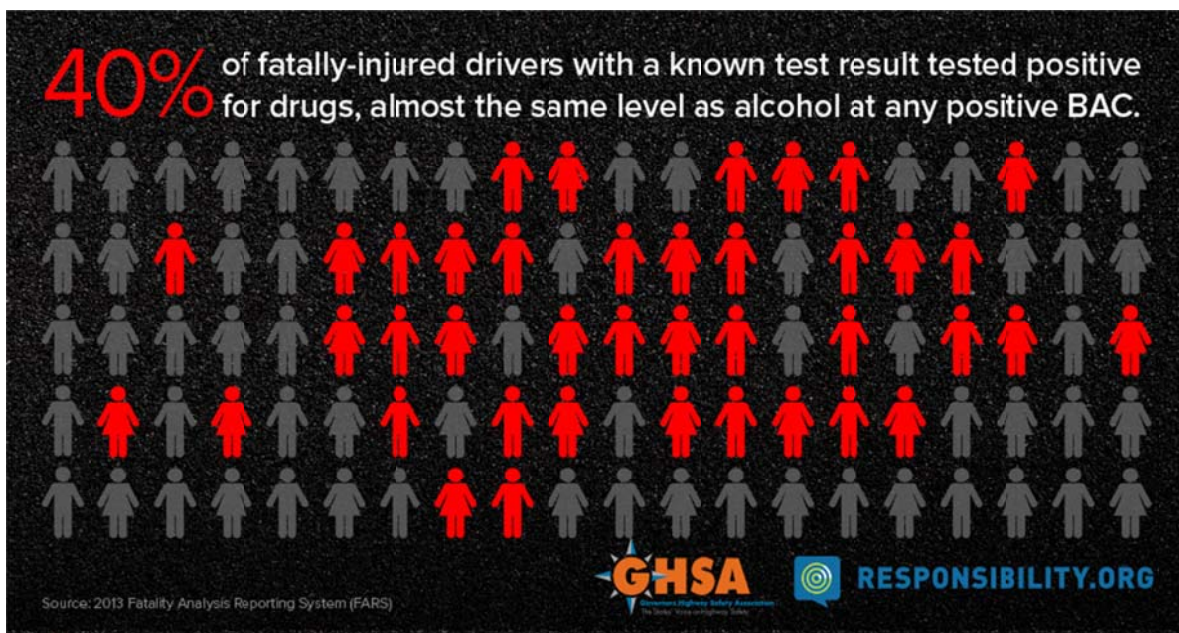


Prescription Drugs & Driving



JUST THE FACTS

- Driving while under the influence of prescription drugs is not always safe, even if the drugs are legal.
- There is no finite data as to how many motorists drive impaired by prescription drugs.ⁱ
- This chart shows the large number of fatally injured drivers that tested positive for some drug:



- Many states are giving police officers special training to detect signs of motorist drug impairment.ⁱⁱⁱ
- The effects on one's motor skills after ingesting prescription drugs vary depending on both the person and the type of drug ingested.^{iv}
- For example, anti-anxiety drugs can slow down alertness and reaction time and stimulants can impair the ability to judge distance.^v Even common cold medicines can cause drowsiness.
- Some other reactions might include blurred vision, dizziness, fainting, nausea, or excitability.^{vi}

IT'S THE LAW

- Motorists **can** be charged with Driving While Intoxicated (DWI) for driving under the influence of legal prescription drugs under Section 49.01 of the Texas Penal Code.
- “Intoxicated” means that one does not have “normal use of mental or physical faculties by reason of the introduction of alcohol, a controlled substance...*[or] a drug.*” (italics added)(Section 49.01 of the Texas Penal Code). Notice that the law does not say “illegal drug.”

KEEP IT SAFE

Responsible drivers should remember:

- Read the label on whatever drug you are taking **very carefully** to see if it safe to operate a car after ingesting.
- Even if a drug is “drive-safe,” be careful to limit yourself to acceptable doses as provided on the label as larger doses may make it unsafe to operate a vehicle.
- Be careful when mixing prescriptions as the combination may increase impairment.
- When in doubt, do not get behind the wheel! If you are unsure whether a drug will impair your motor skills, it is probably best to wait until you arrive at your destination to ingest the drug. Consult your prescribing physician if you believe your medication might impair your ability to drive.
- Never take prescription drugs that were not prescribed specifically to YOU.

What Other Safety Tips Can You Suggest?

ⁱ Goodnough, Abby and Katie Zezima, *Drivers on Prescription Drugs Are Hard to Convict*, New York Times (July 24, 2010), available at http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/25/us/25drugged.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0

ⁱⁱ Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS), 2013. Available at <http://www.propertycasualty360.com/2015/10/14/drug-impaired-driving-on-the-increase-while-drunk?page=2&slreturn=1483985332>.

ⁱⁱⁱ See *Supra* note i.

^{iv} *Id.*

^v *Id.*

^{vi} *Some Medications and Driving Don't Mix* (Food and Drug Administration), 2016. Available at <https://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm107894.htm>.