

Drink Driving in Ireland - Awareness Raising and Education

The Government's Road Safety Strategy, 2007 to 2012 identifies three key actions in relation to Drink Driving and the lowering of the permissible Blood Alcohol Concentration limits for drivers.

- Action 76. To legislate for and introduce a reduction in the legal Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) for drivers.**
- Action 2. To implement mass media campaigns which target the main causal factors for collisions, deaths and serious injuries for all road users but in particular the high risk groups.**
- Action 6. Lead the implementation of a comprehensive integrated road safety education programme in Pre-school, Primary, Post-Primary, Third Level and in the Community.**

1. Anti Drink Driving - Mass Media Campaigns

Anti Drink Driving – A Joint North / South Campaign

The Road Safety Authority has been engaged in the task of educating the public on the dangers of drink driving continuously over the last decade. The most significant activity has seen the RSA join forces with its counterpart in Northern Ireland, the Department of the Environment, to promote anti-drink driving message on an all island basis. This has resulted in the development of the most successful and hard hitting road safety adverts to ever be viewed on TVs north and south.

Specifically this has involved the launch of the first all island anti drink driving shock advert 'Shame' in 2000 and later the second anti drink driving shock advert 'Just One' in 2005. Both were launched jointly by Ministers from both sides of border and involved both An Garda Síochána and the PSNI.

'CRASHED LIVES'

The 'Crashed Lives' road safety campaign launched in 2007 features two TV adverts entitled 'Micilín'. In this true life account Micilín Feeney describes how when aged 23 years he crashed on, Halloween night 2004, in Lettermullen, County Galway. Micilín survived his crash but suffers from an acquired brain injury. In his own words he says *"I made a stupid mistake. I had been drinking and then I drove. If you think drinking and driving is cool, just think of me. Never risk it."* Micilín tells his story in both English and Irish and his ads have been airing on TVs and on radio for the past four years. Micilín has also appeared on many TV chat shows and radio stations appealing for people not to drink and drive.

Christmas Anti Drink Driving Campaigns

In addition the RSA and An Garda Síochána have staged major high profile education campaigns at Christmas / New Year time to highlight the dangers of drink driving. More recently these campaigns were launched, in the National Rehabilitation Hospital in Dun Laoghaire, Dublin, by President of Ireland, Ms Mary McAleese, in both 2009 and 2010.

‘The Morning After’

To highlight the dangers of drink driving the morning after a night out socializing the RSA has been running a major campaign in association with the drinks industry group MEAS (Mature Enjoyment of Alcohol in Society) since 2007. This is a major campaign that includes a TV advert, two radio ads, outdoor advertising in clubs and pubs, and the handing out of campaign literature by An Garda Síochána at road side checkpoints. The campaign runs each year at Christmas & New year period and over the St. Patrick’s festival. The campaign will run again in 2011 / 2012.

Commission for Taxi Regulation

The RSA ran a joint campaign with the Commission for Taxi Regulation in 2008, 2009 and 2010 to highlight the dangers of drink driving and the need to make alternative plans if socializing. Specifically the public were advised to book a taxi, hackney or mini bus and to leave the keys at home. This campaign included a TV, Radio and outdoor advertising campaign. The campaign was launched at a high profile event in 2008 which attracted considerable media attention. The campaign ran during the summer months and again at Christmas to complement the Road Safety Authority’s anti-drink drive initiatives.

www.drinkdriving.ie

In 2009 the RSA launched a new website aimed at dispelling the myths surrounding drink driving. The site was set up to provide members of the public with factual information on the effects of drinking and driving and its role in road deaths and serious injuries.

‘Take One for the Road!’

In a joint initiative with the Vintners’ Federation of Ireland (VFI) and FBD Insurance in 2009, the RSA distributed 30,000 free high visibility reflective vests among 4,200 rural pubs. The safety drive was part of a major road safety blitz aimed at protecting pedestrians and cyclists travelling to and from the local pub.

St. Patrick’s Day

Every year the RSA and An Garda Síochána join forces in the run up to the St. Patrick’s Day period to issue a joint appeal warning of the dangers of drinking and driving.

‘European Night Without Accident’

For the past five years the RSA hosted the EU wide project ‘European Night Without Accident’ in October as part of ‘Irish Road Safety Week’. The initiative aims to promote responsible behavior, in relation to drinking and driving, among young adults.

The initiative is organized by the RSA but run by young adult volunteers who encourage groups of youngsters entering night-clubs to appoint a 'designated driver' for the night. The 'designated driver' is given a wrist-band to show their intention to stay alcohol-free for the night. When leaving the night-club, the 'designated driver' is invited to be voluntarily breathalysed by the volunteers to see if the commitment was honoured.

Results showed that a high number of young people act as designated drivers and chose to abstain from drinking and driving on the night. The more recent event took place in 11 nightclubs in 9 different towns and cities across the country.

Concerts / Festivals

The RSA has brought the anti drink driving message to young adults through interventions at all the major summer music festivals, over the past decade, in particular, the Oxegen Music Festival which is the biggest outdoor music festival of the year, the Electric Picnic and also car enthusiast events such as Modified Motors.

Pete St. John

Renowned singer/songwriter Pete St. John joined forces with the RSA to take a unique approach to encourage people not to drive if they have been drinking, with a new song called '*Never Drink and Drive*'. Known for writing widely sung ballads such as *The Fields of Athenry* and *The Rare Old Times*, Pete produced a memorable song asking people not to take the risk when it comes to drinking and driving.

The song is supported by the Road Safety Authority (RSA) and is available for download from www.neverdrinkanddrivesong.com.

Minority Ethnic Campaigns

The RSA has been running a foreign language road safety campaign since 2006.

The campaign includes a leaflet and poster entitled 'Road Safety & the Law'. Both have been translated into eight foreign languages reflecting the main minority ethnic groups in Ireland namely Russian, Polish, Latvian, Lithuanian, French (targeting the west African community), Portuguese (targeting the Brazilian community living in Ireland), Arabic and Chinese. Information on drink driving and the law has been incorporated into this material.

Rules of the Road Book

The RSA launched a new updated "Rules of the Road", in 2007. The much expanded book takes into account the major changes in road use that have taken place in the last decade.

The Rules of the Road sets out clearly and concisely the duties, responsibilities and prohibitions which road traffic law imposes upon all road users. It also promotes safety and courtesy in the use of our roads.

Some of the changes in road use that have been included information on drink driving and the law, in particular, Mandatory Alcohol Testing.

The RSA with the support of the Irish Insurance Federation circulated 1.75 million copies of the Rules of the Road to every household and business across the country in 2007.

General Literature

In addition to the major campaigns the RSA has also produced a suite of educational material literature including posters and leaflets which have been distributed to communities around the country. This distribution has been assisted by An Garda Síochána and Road Safety Officers with Local Authorities.

2. Education Programmes

The RSA has developed comprehensive integrated road safety education programmes in Pre-school, Primary, Post-Primary Third Level and in the Community. Specifically the following education resources are used in Secondary Schools and include tailored modules on raising awareness of drink driving issues:

‘STREETWISE’

This an activity based interactive Road Safety Educational Resource for the Junior Certificate Programme under the curriculum subject CSPE (Civic, Social and Political Education). Streetwise is designed in lesson plan format so that a teacher can pick up the resource and commence the programme immediately.

‘YOUR ROAD TO SAFETY’

This a road safety education pack for Transition Year Students which can also be used at Leaving Certificate Level. This programme encourages active learning and the development of awareness, knowledge, skills and values which will create a foundation for the development of safe road users now and into the future. The programme is available in 20 hour and 45 hour formats and builds on the active learning approaches of the Transition Year Programme. Both programmes feature inputs from other agencies such as the ambulance service, fire service and An Garda Síochána as well as providing for visiting speakers, projects and case studies. It is supported by digital resources including access to international websites on road safety issues at the RSA Website www.rsa.ie. The programme provides for an introduction to road safety for pedestrians, cyclists, motorcyclists and motorists, and cover such issues as safety belts and airbags, driver fatigue, **drink/drug driving**, road safety engineering and enforcement, basic first aid at road crashes, emergency services and rehabilitation, licensing and insurance issues, the NCT, purchasing a car and driving abroad. Relevant Driver Theory Test learning is included at the end of each module. The Department of Education and Science and the RSA offers in-service training to schools offering the transition year programme on how to deliver this resource.

Wrecked.ie

This a road safety educational resource targeted at 17-24 year olds. It utilises real life stories to tell of the true consequences of the many life changing events that

happen on today's roads. It provokes a heated and balanced discussion where 17-24 year olds have a chance to interact about road safety in an open forum. The programme was developed with a multi agency editorial committee which included representation from An Garda Síochána, the Health Service Executive, the Fire Service, Local Authority Road Safety Officer, Youthreach, Fas, and a Behavioural Psychologist from Trinity College Dublin. 'Wrecked.ie' features a series of 16 vodcasts recorded by Irish actors who recount experiences of reckless driving – without showing their faces. Vodcasts are illustrated with high tech animation which demonstrates the key points in each speaker's testimony. 'Wrecked.ie' is accompanied by a 'facilitators guide' which includes additional exercises on each of the topics that introduce the group to the concept an ABC process (actions, behaviour and consequences) providing participants with an opportunity to look at themselves and their behaviour in relation to road safety. The resource was piloted with 73 young people age 17-24 in a number of Fas and Youthreach centres during July and August 2010. 82% of participants reported that the resource had changed their attitude towards road safety. Based on the success of the pilot programme the resource will now be offered to all organisations that work with young people aged 17-24, in addition to going live online at www.wrecked.ie. The case studies deal with the topic of drink driving.

'SAFEGRADS'

The RSA also developed 'SAFEGRADS'- road safety education guidelines aimed at third level education colleges. They provide a structure on which they can build a successful road safety week. The programme includes the road safety interactive shuttle, a fire and ambulance rescue extrication, Garda Síochána Road Show- 'It won't happen to me', road safety campaigns, road safety questions and answers session, road safety table quiz, road safety photography competition, road safety music challenge, and many more events. Drink driving is one of the key themes addressed in 'On Campus' activities during road safety week in third level colleges.

3. Public Attitudes Towards Drink Driving ?

A 2009 poll conducted by Millward Brown Lansdowne on behalf of the RSA shows that support for a lowering of the drink drive limit is high with **7 out of 10** polled supporting the Government's move to lower the legal limit for driving from 0.8 milligrams to 0.5 milligrams. A similar number (73%) also backs the move to legislate for a reduction in the limit to 0.2 milligrams for learner and professional drivers.

The research also confirms that two thirds (65%) of drivers report that there is simply no amount of alcohol that you can drink if driving.

In addition to the RSA's research the AA conducted a major survey of motorists' opinion in Oct 2009 which showed that support for reducing the drink drive limit is very high. The poll of 7,000 motorists showed that 63.9% are in favour of reducing the alcohol limit to 0.5 milligrams.