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PERSONAL INJURY ATTORNEYS

Traffic Deaths Involving Cannabis Are On The Rise

Many states, including California, have legalized the use of marijuana and other cannabis products in recent years. **What effect has that had on car accidents? Are drivers under the influence of cannabis causing more accidents?** One recent study from Boston Medical Center, Boston University (BU), and the University of Victoria examined this exact issue.

Researchers compared car accident fatalities from 2000 to 2018. In particular, researchers wanted to know if there were more fatalities involving drivers who tested positive for cannabis in 2018 compared to 2000. The results were clear – significantly more drivers tested positive for cannabis in 2018 versus 2000.

Understanding the accident data

As part of the study, researchers examined accident fatalities for three categories:

- Drivers who tested positive for a cannabinoid
- Drivers who had alcohol in their system at the time of the crash
- Drivers who had alcohol and cannabis in their system at the time of the accident.

The study found that from 2000 to 2018:

- Cannabis-related crash fatalities increased from 9 percent to 21.5 percent.
- Fatal crashes involving both cannabis and alcohol increased from 4.8 percent to 10.3 percent.
- People killed in cannabis-related crashes were 50 percent more likely to have used alcohol.

Meanwhile, the total number of traffic fatalities involving drivers simply under the influence of alcohol remained the same during the same 18-year period.

What makes cannabis dangerous for drivers?

The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) also conducted an in-depth study into the effects of cannabis on drivers. In the study, drivers under the influence of marijuana participated in driving simulation tests. Researchers also reviewed accident data involving drivers under the influence of marijuana. IIHS researchers found that drivers with cannabis in their system:

- Had more difficulty paying attention
- Had more difficulty staying in their lane
- Had slower reaction times.

Know more about your legal rights

Impaired driving can lead to a crash that leaves people killed or seriously injured. Survivors may suffer broken bones or injuries to the head, neck, or back. Medical expenses for surgery, hospitalization, medication, physical therapy and doctor's appointments can soon become overwhelming. Victims may also be left unable to work because of their injuries.

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Ride Safe: May is Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month

Motorcyclists in California know how amazing riding on the open road can feel. That's probably why California has more motorcyclists than any other state in the country. There are roughly 800,000 registered motorcycles in California, according to vehicle registration statistics.

May is Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month. With so many people riding motorcycles in California, drivers need to be reminded to share the road and help prevent motorcycle accidents.

Here are a few safety suggestions specifically geared for drivers and motorcyclists, courtesy of the Motorcycle Safety Foundation.

Safety tips for drivers

- Take a second look - Motorcycles are smaller than motor vehicles. As a result, drivers might not see a motorcycle hidden in a blind spot. Take an extra moment to look for bikers, especially when making a turn or changing lanes.
- Keep a safe distance - Motorcyclists often need more time and space to slow down. They also can decrease their speed by downshifting, which doesn't activate the bike's brake lights. This is why drivers should leave extra space between their car and the motorcycle in front of them.
- Understand lane shifting - Just because motorcycles take up less space doesn't mean they don't need the entire lane. Motorcyclists often need to adjust their lane position due to road debris, wind, or passing vehicles. Give motorcyclists the space to make quick maneuvers.
- Closer than you think - Many drivers misjudge how far away a motorcyclist is on the road. Because motorcycles are smaller, some drivers think they're farther away. In fact, they're often much closer than you probably think.
- Make eye contact - If you see a motorcyclist, make sure they see you. Don't simply assume they can see you. And remember, that motorcyclist isn't a faceless person. They could be your friend, neighbor, or a family member.

Safety tips for motorcyclists

- Check your bike - Get in the habit of examining your motorcycle before you hit the road. How do your tires look? Check your bike's lights, cables, and fluids. Is there anything dragging or hanging off your motorcycle? Always do a pre-ride check.
- Be more visible - Drivers often complain that they can't see motorcyclists. Make sure they can see you. Wear bright clothing. Turn on your headlights. Avoid blind spots near cars and trucks. And when slowing down, flash your brake lights.
- Assume you're invisible - Even if you think other drivers can see you, assume that they don't see you. Be hyper-aware. Notice your surroundings. Ride defensively and take responsibility for your safety.
- Wear proper gear - Great safety gear exists for motorcyclists. Make sure you wear it. Whether it's a full-face helmet or protective pants, gloves, jackets or boots, the more protective clothing you have on, the safer you will be on the road.
- Be street smart - Defensive riding saves lives. Be aware of changing road conditions. Use the Search-Evaluate-Execute strategy (SEE) to assess possible hazards and respond effectively to them.

We fight for injured riders

Even the safest motorcyclists get hurt in motorcycle accidents caused by reckless drivers. If you were injured or a loved one died in a motorcycle crash due to negligence, you can learn your legal rights and options by talking to an experienced motorcycle accident lawyer from Clancy & Diaz, LLP.

How Do California's Highway Laws Compare To Other States?

Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety wanted to know the answers to these questions. That's why the road safety group recently conducted a study comparing California's highway laws to similar laws in other states.

The Good News...

The good news for drivers in California is the state has many strict laws designed to protect safe drivers. The bad news is many laws should be strengthened as well. First, here are the California traffic laws that take a tough stance:

- Rear-facing child safety seats - California is one of only five states that requires them for children under 2 years old.
- Strict laws that protect passengers - California is one of only six states that gives police the right to stop vehicles if passengers are not wearing their seatbelts.
- Motorcycle helmets - California requires all motorcyclists (including passengers) to wear helmets.

And The Bad News...

The traffic safety study gave California low grades compared to other states for the following reasons:

- Impaired driving laws - California does not require ignition interlock devices for drivers convicted of drunk driving.
- Teen driving laws - California allows teenagers 15½ years old to seek a provisional instruction permit. Most states require teens to wait until they're 16 years old to get a learner's permit.

Legal Help is Available

Traffic accidents and fatalities continue to climb higher in California. During the first nine months of 2021, traffic fatalities were 16 percent higher in California compared to the same period in 2020, according to the National Safety Council. If you or a loved one has been injured in a car crash caused by another driver in California, contact our law firm for a free consultation. We proudly serve clients in Walnut Creek, Antioch, and throughout the Bay Area.

California has some of the busiest highways in the country. This includes I-80 and I-680 in the Bay Area. So what state laws exist to protect drivers and prevent car accidents on highways in California?

And how do those laws stack up against other states?

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Know more about your legal rights

But negligent drivers who cause these accidents often deny being impaired. Insurance companies will try to minimize injuries and look for ways to minimize compensation. They may make a settlement offer that falls far short of covering the actual damages suffered.

That's why you need an experienced car accident lawyer if you've been injured by an impaired driver in Walnut Creek, Antioch, or anywhere in the Bay Area.

If you were injured in an accident caused by an impaired driver, you have recourse through the civil justice system. The legal team at Clancy & Diaz, LLP, has been standing up for the rights of injury victims for decades in California's Bay Area. We know how to build legal cases based on the facts. As your attorney, we can help you take a stand and demand the compensation you deserve.

Call us to learn more about how we can help you with your potential legal case.