



News Release

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Culture change: Lowest number of impaired driving fatalities and injuries on record *Awareness, enforcement, legislation pushing drivers to make better choices*

A significant drop in the number of impaired driving fatalities last year suggests most people in Saskatchewan have decided it is simply not okay to drive impaired.

Preliminary numbers indicate 21* people lost their lives last year as a result of impaired driving collisions, compared to an annual average of 54 between 2009-2018. Injuries resulting from impaired driving continued to trend downward, with 332 reported in 2019, compared to the annual average of 595 over the previous decade. The 2019 impaired driving fatality and the injury numbers are the lowest SGI has on record.**

“Our government has worked with victims’ families, law enforcement, advocacy groups and other stakeholders on a number of fronts to improve safety on our roads and fight Saskatchewan’s impaired driving problem,” Minister Responsible for SGI Joe Hargrave said. “The 2019 numbers are further evidence that Saskatchewan is making major progress on the province’s historically high impaired driving rates. The result is more lives saved and fewer families having to experience the unspeakable tragedy of seeing someone they love killed or severely injured due to impaired driving.”

Minister Hargrave credited the downward trend in impaired driving casualties to several factors, giving particular credit to families of impaired driving victims who share their stories and their heartbreak in the hopes of convincing others to make better choices.

“I truly believe the work those families do – whether it’s in an SGI campaign, working as MADD ambassadors or simply by sharing their experience in conversations – has saved lives,” Hargrave said. “It’s impossible to hear their stories and not be touched by what they’ve gone through.”

“No one should ever have to experience the pain of losing a loved one to something as senseless and unnecessary as impaired driving,” said Linda Van de Vorst, whose son, daughter-in-law and two young grandchildren were killed by an impaired driver in 2016 (read the story about Jordan, Chanda, Kamryn and Miguire Van de Vorst [here](#)). “It’s encouraging to see progress on Saskatchewan’s impaired driving rates. We have the power – and the responsibility – to keep impaired driving from destroying anyone else’s life.”

“Through strong laws and sanctions, consistent enforcement and hard-hitting awareness initiatives, Saskatchewan is making great strides in the fight to stop impaired driving, to save lives and to prevent injuries,” said MADD Canada Chief Executive Officer Andrew Murie. “The progress being made is truly inspirational, and we thank Minister Hargrave, the Government of Saskatchewan and law enforcement for their leadership.”

Minister Hargrave highlighted a number of efforts and initiatives that have helped change impaired driving attitudes and behaviours in Saskatchewan:

- Increased enforcement – An additional 120 traffic enforcement positions funded by government and SGI since 2014 via the Combined Traffic Services Saskatchewan initiative.
- Stronger legislation – New provincial impaired driving laws put in place in 2014, 2017 and 2018, which brought in tougher consequences for impaired drivers including vehicle seizures, licence suspensions and steep financial penalties.
- More awareness – Public education efforts by SGI, law enforcement, MADD, SADD and other organizations that consistently reinforce the importance of driving sober, or getting a safe ride from a sober friend, a taxi, a bus, or a designated driving service.
- More options – The introduction of ridesharing, providing an additional safe ride option in some communities.
- Hospitality industry focus – Diligent efforts by owners, management and staff of many licensed establishments throughout Saskatchewan who help their patrons find a safe ride home.

“I want to thank everyone who has made the decision to never drive impaired, and everyone who has stopped someone they cared about from getting behind the wheel in no condition to drive,” Hargrave said. “We need to not just sustain these numbers; we need to improve upon them. We will continue to work hard to change the culture around impaired driving in Saskatchewan.”

** Impaired driving fatality data is considered preliminary, based on information available from police forces in Saskatchewan, and may be adjusted based on additional information from the Coroner’s office or other sources*

*** SGI has what it considers to be reliable data on impaired driving deaths dating back to 1988. The previous lowest number of impaired driving fatalities in a single year was 39 in 2017. The previous lowest number of impaired driving injuries was 360 in 2018.*

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