

## Alcohol's Effect on the Brain is Rapid, Detrimental

Researchers at Heidelberg University in Germany have found that it takes only six minutes for a change in brain cells to occur after drinking the equivalent of about three glasses of beer or two glasses of wine, Science Daily reported June 15.

Researchers gave 15 healthy subjects (eight male and seven female) enough alcohol to produce a blood alcohol level of 0.05 to 0.06 percent -- sufficient to impair driving but not severe intoxication.

Using magnetic resonance spectroscopy (MRS), the researchers found that the concentration of creatine, a substance that protects brain cells, decreased as the amount of alcohol increased. Chloine, a component of cell membranes, was also reduced. Lead author Armin Biller of Heidelberg's Department of Neuroradiology said that the reduction in chloine probably indicated that alcohol trig-

gered changes in the composition of cell membranes.

The researchers also found that the day after the subjects had consumed alcohol, their brain metabolism had reverted to what it had been prior to the experiment. However, Armin warned that, "The brain's ability to recover from the effect of alcohol decreases or is eliminated as the consumption of alcohol increases. The acute effects demonstrated in our study could possibly form the basis for the permanent brain damage that is known to occur in alcoholics. This should be clarified in future studies."

The study found no differences between male and female subjects, suggesting that the brains of female and male subjects reacted to alcohol consumption the same way.

This study was published online in the *Journal of Cerebral Blood Flow & Metabolism*.

## Report: Workplace Screening and Brief Intervention

### What Employers Can and Should Do About Excessive Alcohol Use

Excessive alcohol use by employees and their family members has a substantial impact on the cost of doing business in the United States. Problems associated with alcohol use are not just confined to drinking during work hours. Excessive drinking boosts absenteeism, diminishes productivity, and contributes to skyrocketing health care costs.

Analysis of recent government surveys related to substance use and the workplace reveals the true extent of hazardous alcohol use and the negative effect it has on the American workplace. A research team led by Eric Goplerud, Ph.D., the director of Ensuring Solutions to Alcohol Problems at The George Washington University Medical Center, has found that the burden of workplace alcohol problems is disproportionately distributed, with industries such as construction, hospitality, and manufacturing having higher than average rates of alcohol misuse and dependency.


For example, according to the research team's analysis, a hotel chain with 20,000 employees operating throughout the United States would accrue \$8.9 million in alcohol-related health care costs and absenteeism in a single year.

Only a handful of employees and family members with alcohol problems ever get help. Ensuring Solutions' research finds that fewer than 10 percent of working people with serious alcohol problems receive any kind of treatment. Yet there is a relatively simple way to reduce alcohol-related costs. By working with health plans, health care providers, and employee assistance programs, employers can initiate a proven method to identify and help people who drink too much alcohol. This method—called screening and brief intervention or SBI—has been demonstrated to reduce problems associated with excessive alcohol use in a variety of settings, including hospitals, universities, and primary care. If the Virginia-based construction company were to implement a workplace SBI program that identified and provided brief treatment for half of the employees and family members with an alcohol problem (an identification rate similar to depression), savings in lowered health care costs and improved

productivity would amount to \$1.8 million.

In the past, employers have played a significant role in promoting screening and treatment for illnesses like diabetes, heart disease, and depression—all of which were once significantly under-diagnosed. Alcohol problems have a similar impact on the quality of American life and the profitability of American business. Yet alcohol use disorders are significantly under-diagnosed. By promoting Workplace SBI, employers can improve productivity, reduce costs, and identify problems before they lead to tragic accidents or expensive health care interventions.

[http://www.ensuringsolutions.org/usr\\_doc/Workplace\\_SBI\\_Report\\_Final.pdf](http://www.ensuringsolutions.org/usr_doc/Workplace_SBI_Report_Final.pdf)



## About Us

The DWI Resource Center is a tax-exempt 501(c)3 New Mexico organization formed to reduce the social and economic impact of DWI through public awareness, education, prevention programs and research. The Center also provides assistance to victims and serves as a central clearinghouse of information on DWI and victims' rights.

- Research and Statistics
- Public Policy & Law
- Victims' Rights Legal Assistance Project
- Court Monitoring
- Drug-Free Workplace Programs
- Retailers For Responsibility
- Victim Impact Panels

For more information about the Center or to make a contribution, please call us at (505) 881-1084, or visit our website at [www.dwiresourcecenter.org](http://www.dwiresourcecenter.org).



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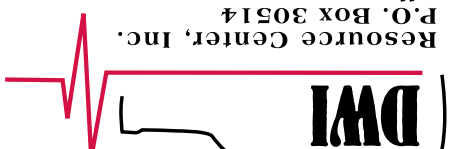
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## This is your LAST newsletter

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P.O. Box 30514  
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# How to Host a Safe Holiday Celebration

## Employee Holiday Gift: Safe Holiday Celebration

"Tis the season to be jolly...". The holiday season is fast approaching, signaling the start of employer celebrations across the country. The end of the year is an opportune time to show appreciation to hard-working employees whose dedication has helped you succeed.

A holiday party can be a great way for employees to unwind and have a little fun; however, such festivities can also spell liability for employers if they are not handled carefully.

At their worst, events gone sour can result in considerable employer cost in the form of negligence claims, lawsuits, lost employee man-hours, and a tarnished company reputation in the workplace and the community.

Finding a balance between fun and safety is the key, and a little planning and caution can go a long way to keeping holiday celebrations safe and employer risks at a minimum.

One of the biggest potential problems that businesses face when hosting holiday parties is the liability that arises when alcohol is served. Employers may be held liable if an employee consumes alcoholic beverages at a company-hosted event, then causes injury to him or herself or injures a third-party. Add to this liability the guilt and sense of responsibility you might feel if a company party directly contributed to such an accident, and it is easy to see why taking safety precautions is such a crucial step in event planning.

To reduce your company's liability during holiday party planning, consider alternatives to the traditional evening holiday party where alcohol is served. For example:

- Host a company picnic or field trip
- Close the office early and sponsor a company luncheon or potluck
- Start up a "Secret Santa" or gift exchange tradition
- Rent a game room or movie theater to treat employees to an afternoon of amusement
- Invite employees to an amusement park, carnival, or festival at the company's expense

The benefit of sponsoring such alternative activities is not just a reduction in potential company liability, but also the opportunity it affords to involve the families of employees. The success of a good business year or the strain of a bad business year is felt not only by the employees of a company, but also by those individuals closest to them.

As such, family and friends of employees may be equally deserving of a year-end celebration. In addition, such family-friendly events foster a positive atmosphere that recognizes the impact your business environment has on the surrounding community, promotes strong family ties,

minimizes the likelihood and occurrences of distasteful behavior, and allows co-workers and their families to get to know each other.

If your company does choose to host an event where alcohol is served, it is still possible to minimize company liability and reduce the risk to partygoers. Consider the following "Safe Celebration" tips:

- Provide plenty of non-alcoholic alternatives for partygoers
- Limit the length of time the bar is open and number of alcoholic drinks served to each party attendee
- Provide transportation (taxis, buses) or pre-arranged designated drivers for all partygoers
- Monitor party-goers' behavior to ensure that no one is putting themselves in harm's way and identify those individuals whose alcohol consumption has exceeded an appropriate tolerance level
- Hold the party in an establishment with a liquor license, such as a restaurant or bar
- Hire a professional bartender to serve all drinks, both alcoholic and non-alcoholic
- Look into obtaining liability insurance to cover the event

Holiday festivities are meant to be enjoyable and an opportunity to celebrate another successful business year. By taking the proper precautions and with an ounce of planning, your next company event is sure to be a fun-filled and safe celebration.

### Nine Tips for Office Celebrations

1. Be honest with employees. Make sure your employees know your workplace substance abuse policy and that the policy addresses the use of alcoholic beverages in any work-related situation and office social function.
2. Post the policy. Use every communication vehicle to make sure your employees know the policy. Prior to an office party, use break room bulletin boards, office e-mail and paycheck envelopes to communicate your policy and concerns.
3. Reinvent the office party concept. Why have the typical office party? Try something new like an indoor carnival, group outing to an amusement park or volunteer activity with a local charity.
4. Make sure employees know when to say when. If you do serve alcohol at an office event, make sure all employees know that they are welcome to attend and have a good time, but that they are expected to act responsibly.
5. Make it the office party of choice. Make sure there are plenty of non-alcoholic beverages available.
6. Eat...and be merry! Avoid serving lots of salty,

greasy or sweet foods which tend to make people thirsty. Serve foods rich in starch and protein which stay in the stomach longer and slow the absorption of alcohol in the bloodstream.

7. Designate party managers. Remind managers that even at the office party, they may need to implement the company's alcohol and substance abuse policy.

8. Arrange alternative transportation. Anticipate the need for alternative transportation for all partygoers and make special transportation arrangements in advance of the party. Encourage all employees to make use of the alternative transportation if they consume any alcohol.

9. Serve none for the road. Stop serving alcohol before the party officially ends.

If alcoholic beverages are provided at office social functions, state laws regarding their use and resulting legal responsibilities should be consulted and addressed. This information provided by the U.S. Department of Labor is not intended to be a substitute for legal advice and should not be relied upon to determine what steps employers can or should take to address potential legal liability.

### Drinkers Incur More Costs, Stay Longer in ER

The social and economic costs of drunk driving are well documented, but a new study from Rhode Island Hospital finds that even minimally impaired drivers incur higher-than-average costs when they land in hospital emergency rooms, Science Daily reported Oct. 7.

Researcher Michael Lee, M.D., of the Injury Prevention Center at Rhode Island Hospital and colleagues found that drivers with any detectable alcohol in their system incurred \$4,538 more in treatment costs and stayed in the emergency room an average of 3.3 hours longer than patients who did not have alcohol in their system. "The magnitudes are striking for this minimally injured population," said Lee. "This represents a burden of alcohol-impaired driving that was underreported in the past."

The study focused on 1,618 drivers ages 18 to 65 who were treated at a Level 1 Trauma Center and discharged directly home from the emergency room rather than admitted to the hospital -- the typical outcome for 80 percent of alcohol-impaired drivers treated in emergency departments (EDs).

"A large percentage of [the] cost can be directly correlated to a higher frequency of and costlier diagnostic imaging studies. Imaging itself represents 69 percent of the charge differential," said Lee. "While an alcohol-impaired driver may be treated for only minor injuries and discharged to home, there is still a considerably higher cost to treat that patient in an ED. Further, the time spent on them with a longer length of stay results in delays for other patients who need care in an ED."

The findings were reported in the October 2009 issue of the *Annals of Emergency Medicine*.

### Expert Offers Tips On Coping With Grief During The Holidays

The holidays are a joyous time for most, but for those who have experienced a loss, the usually festive time of year can be a painful reminder that their loved one is no longer around.

"Traditionally, it is a time of family, friends and laughter, but for people who are in the grieving process, the holidays can enhance feelings of personal grief and separate us from what used to make us happy," says Cynthia Bozich-Keith, a clinical assistant professor in Purdue University's School of Nursing.

She says that although every person's grief is individual, there are several things a grieving person can do to get through the season.

She offers the following suggestions:

-- Be gentle with yourself. Be sure to take time out to care for yourself, whether it is through pampering or just slowing down your pace.

-- Be sure to eat a nutritious diet, exercise, get adequate sleep and avoid alcohol.

-- Talk about your feelings with people you love and who love you. Allow yourself the right to talk about the person who died. The process of sharing memories may help with the healing process.

-- Set limits. Be realistic about the difference between what you want to do and what you can do vs. what you should do. "The shoulds will get you every time," Bozich-Keith says. "It's important to let go of the need to be perfect or doing it all. If you're used to doing all of the shopping, cooking and decorating around the holidays, perhaps this is the year to share those things with others."

-- Don't feel guilty if you find yourself enjoying yourself around the holidays. "It is not disrespectful to the memory of your loved one if you have a good time," she says. "Your loved one would be happy to know you are enjoying yourself."

-- Embrace your memories and find comfort in them. "This is the bittersweet part," she says. "Our memories often bring us to both tears and laughter, but they are what sustain us through the years."

-- Celebrate life. Attend a holiday or religious service if faith is part of your life. Some people find comfort in acts of remembrance such as donating a poinsettia in memory of a loved one at church or making a donation in their name to a charity. Also, recognize that it is acceptable to create new traditions.

Bozich-Keith says it is important to keep in mind that sadness is normal during the holidays, no matter how long ago the loss took place.

"Try to ride the wave of emotions and accept that feelings of sadness and pain are unavoidable and are heightened during certain times," she says. "The intense feelings will pass, but grief is an ongoing process. Don't ever expect closure. It gets easier with time, but there will always be an empty space at the table."