

Researchers Suggest Lowering Legal Blood Alcohol Level Nationwide

By [Jonathan McCall](#) January 21, 2018 at 11:17 pm

BALTIMORE (WJZ) — Every year, roughly 10,000 Americans are killed in alcohol-related crashes, including about 1,200 deaths from alcohol-related incidents in Maryland. But now, researchers have come out with new recommendations that they believe could save lives.

For more than a year, researchers with the National Academies of Science have been looking into ways to reduce alcohol-related deaths in the U.S.

“We’re looking at 10,000 deaths a year on U.S. roads as a result of alcohol-impaired driving,” says Dr. David Jernigan of the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

Jernigan was among a group of researchers tasked with finding solutions to the problem. One of the findings: lowering the legal blood-alcohol level from .08 to .05.

“Two billion people worldwide are now covered by a .05 limit. We just think the U.S. should just catch up with the rest of the world,” Jernigan said.

He says the lower limits would require people to drink less, but even that could be tough because of how people process alcohol. However, with alcohol involved in nearly half of all crashes, Jernigan still maintains the biggest message is don’t drink and drive.

Other ideas proposed to lower the number of deaths also include increasing alcohol taxes, making alcohol less available and limiting alcohol marketing — especially during high-profile events like the Super Bowl and NASCAR races.

Jernigan said these messages have the greatest impact on young adults, which is the same group most likely to be killed in alcohol-related crashes.

“21 to 25-year-olds are 28 percent of the deaths on our roadways,” he says. “Clearly, kids in that age who are dying on the roads most likely started drinking when they were teens.”

Jernigan says self-driving cars could potentially put a dent in the number, but he adds that technology is years away.

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