BLOOD ALCOHOL CONTENT (BAC)

Seattle DUI Lawyers Explain the Legal Limit

When a person is first pulled over on suspicion of driving under the influence, they will be asked to complete a breath test or blood test. These tests are conducted to determine the driver's blood alcohol content (BAC), which is an indicator of alcohol intoxication for legal or medical purposes. Blood alcohol content is essentially defined as the percentage of alcohol in a person's blood stream. For example, a blood alcohol content, or BAC, of .10% means that one tenth of a percent of a person's blood is composed of alcohol. This was first determined for medical purposes, but it is also used in cases of the law. A breath test is typically the most common method of measuring a person's BAC.

In Washington, an officer will typically offer a person the opportunity to provide a breath sample during a DUI investigation. The breath sample is captured by a device known as the datamaster, which measures the alcohol content in the air in a person's lungs released during respiration. In cases of DUI investigations where the person suspected of DUI has been injured and is taken to the hospital, or there is a suspicion of intoxication via either illegal or prescribed narcotics, the officer may seek to administer a blood test instead of a breath test. This test is adminstered by a phlebotomist taking samples of a person's blood, which at then sealed, shipped, and tested at a toxicology lab to determine the level of alcohol in the suspect's blood.

In the state of Washington, it is both against the law to drive a vehicle with a blood alcohol content at or above .08% or simply be impaired by alcohol or drugs while behind the wheel of a vehicle or boat. The .08% number was chosen to be the "legal limit" for individuals over the age of 21 in Washington not only to create a common baseline, but also because a .08 BAC is around the time that many people begin to experience impairment of their judgment and other reasoning skills. According to a study on the progressive effects of alcohol, a BAC between 0.06-0.09 will result in blunted feelings, disinhibition, extroversion, and impairment in reasoning, depth perception, glare recovery and peripheral vision. A person's ability to be affected by alocohol may depend on factors such as height, weight, experience, and current medications.

BAC Limit for Drivers Under 21

For individuals under the age of 21 in Washington, the legal limit is at .02% but it is illegal for any underage individual to consume or purchase alcohol. Regardless of what age you are, it is wise to contact a DUI defense attorney if you have been pulled over for suspicion of drunk driving. The blood or breath tests will either be conducted at the police stop or immediately after the person has been taken back to the police station. If a test is conducted more than two hours after the arrest has taken place, it will most likely yield inaccurate results.

Arrested for drunk driving near Seattle? Seek legal representation today!

If you or someone you love have been arrested and charged with DUI, please call a Seattle defense lawyer from Lewis & Laws, PLLC at your soonest convenience. Devices that are often used to measure blood alcohol content are not always accurate, and one small mistake can result in serious consequences for an innocent defendant. In some cases, where a breathalyzer has not been properly calibrated, it may produce incorrect results, showing that a person's blood alcohol content is higher than it actually is. If you believe that this has happened to you, do not wait to call our office for a **free consultation** of your case today.