

Eradication of drunken driving (Measures against habitual drunk drivers)

Recently the number of traffic accidents caused by drunk driving has declined as a result of growing public awareness that “drunk driving is unacceptable” and consolidation of two sets of penal codes by revising the Road Traffic Act, establishment of a new penal code related to providing alcoholic beverages to the driver and being in the car with a drunk driver etc. Compared to the ratio of fatalities due to drunken driving 10 years earlier, it has decreased to almost a third and the percentage of drunken-driving-related fatalities in the total number of fatalities decreased by half.

In the year 2007, there were more than 74,000 cases of drunk driving. However, if we consider the potential drunk drivers who were not arrested according to a survey (The data of survey, hereafter, referred to as "Joint survey") conducted jointly by the Kanagawa Prefectural Police Headquarters and the National Hospital Organization Kurihama Alcoholism Center, it shows that out of the people with a drunk driving experience, about half were never arrested. This shows that the eradication of drunk driving has not been completely successful.

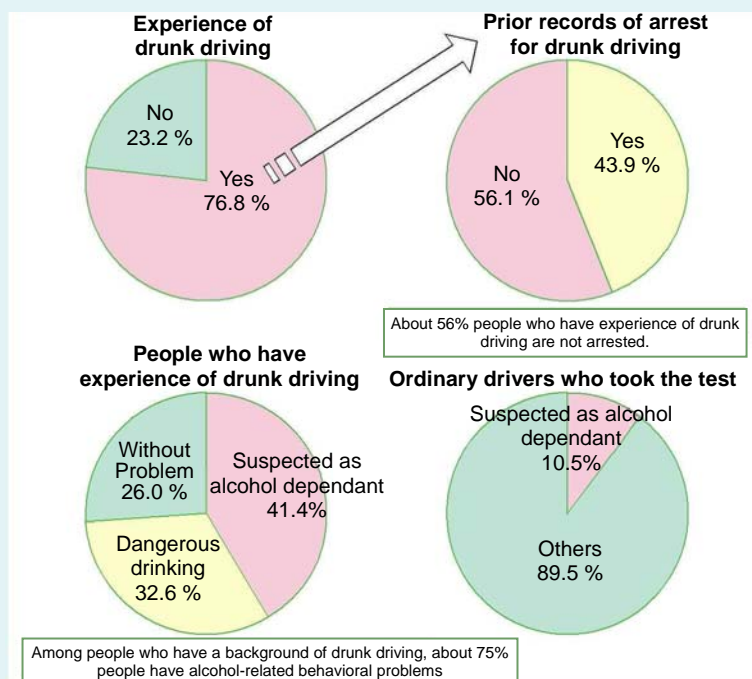
In order to understand problems related to repeated habitual drunk driving, the issues of regular drinkers, heavy drinkers and alcohol dependant people who cannot control their own drinking behavior, are pointed out. For the eradication of drunk driving, it is important to reduce the number of regular drinkers and heavy drinkers.

Under such awareness of the problem, in April 2007, the committee for measures against habitual drunk drivers was established in the Transport Measures Headquarters and the investigation of measures against habitual drunk drivers was promoted by the concerned ministries and agencies. In June, “Measures against Present Habitual Drunk Drivers” were decided with respect to the budgetary request for fiscal year 2008. In December, health enhancement of citizens was planned on the basis of the decision of the budgetary plan designed by the government for the fiscal year 2008. Moreover, "Promotion of Measures against Habitual Drunk Drivers" was decided, wherein various measures for eradication of drunk driving were incorporated.

Here, an introduction is given about the implementation status of measures against habitual drunk drivers, and the summary of the above-mentioned joint survey.

1. Summary of the joint survey result (Alcohol Syndrome Screening Test for persons who have been penalized and who are attending the course)

In the Questionnaire Survey for those who lost their license as a result of penalty and are taking a seminar for such ones, which was jointly conducted by the Kanagawa Prefectural Police Headquarters and the National Hospital Organization Kurihama Alcoholism Center, 76.8% people had history of drunk driving while 56.1% people did not have arrest history related to drinking. The result of the Alcohol Syndrome Screening Test (AUDIT) conducted for persons with a history of drunk driving indicated that there were 41.4% persons who were suspected of being alcohol dependant. The percentage of persons with dangerous drinking was 32.6% and thus, about 70% of them had alcohol-related behavioral problems. Out of the persons who took the driving aptitude test, about 10.5% were suspected of being alcohol dependant. In case of ordinary drivers, there were people who are suspected of being addicted to alcohol. However, the persons with a history of drunk driving had the maximum number of such ones.



Note: Created on the basis of the survey conducted jointly by Kanagawa Prefectural Police Headquarters and National Hospital Organization Kurihama Alcoholism Center

2. Situation of implementation of measures against habitual drunk drivers

(1) Spreading information on the effect of alcohol and specialized counseling institutions

With cooperation from the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare and the Cabinet Office created and distributed to related organizations a list of specialized counseling organizations by prefectures, which contains names of specialized counseling organizations such as Mental Health and Welfare Centers where counseling is conducted for alcohol dependence syndromes, organizations giving special treatment for alcohol dependence syndromes, and self help groups such as Danshu-kai etc.

Information on the effects of alcohol on the body is given on the home page of Cabinet Office. Moreover, in April 2008, active publicity implementation for reasonable alcoholic intake was requested to a group of 8 alcohol manufacturers such as the Japan Sake Brewers Association. A request was made to the General Insurance Association of Japan to inform people that injury or car damage due to drunk driving is not covered by insurance.

In Japan, from fiscal year 2008, the Japan Specified Non-profit Corporation to Prevent Alcohol and Drug Problems (ASK), with the help from the General Insurance Association of Japan, worked mainly on the training for “drunk drinking prevention instructors” who spread the basic knowledge of alcohol and the methods to restrain drinking. Practical use of the training is expected in enterprises and corporations. <<Refer to: http://www.ask.or.jp/ddd_instructor.html>>

(2) Approach to correct drinking behavior at various opportunities

In the Osaka and Tohigi Prefecture, according to the government's decisions on the measures against habitual drunk drivers, pamphlets containing information on the effects of alcohol on the body and mind and the places where consultation on alcoholism is provided were distributed in training centers for those who have been penalized. Moreover, the National Police Agency has sent a list of specialized counseling organizations to police stations in every prefecture and is promoting approaches for correcting drinking behavior at various opportunities such as during various safety and street guidance movements, at the time of giving guidance on the street, and during the courses for persons being penalized etc.



(3) Enhancement of the training of a person who have been penalized and early identification of habitual drunk drivers

The National Police Agency gave directions the police in all prefectures to set up a class for drunk drivers in the course for those who have been penalized. In 2007, a course about drinking was organized in police agencies in all prefectures. In the course, a lecture and an important training session related to the hazards of drunk driving was conducted, in which they had to simulate drunk driving experience by wearing "drunk goggles" (which gives the feeling of drunk driving) and they received intensive education about the dangers of drunk driving through lectures by the family members of victims of drunk driving and by the members of Danshu-kai (organization to help stop drinking).

(4) Enhancement of the treatment of inmates for traffic offenses related to drunk driving and for probationers and parolees

The Ministry of Justice enhanced traffic safety guidance for inmates by listening to external expertise on the effective treatments for alcohol dependence to prevent recidivism of drunk driving. They carried out an investigation for the creation of guidance material related to drunken driving prevention for probationers and parolees. The Ministry of Justice consider the new treatment program for inmates who have alcohol dependence and the enhancement of traffic safety guidance by expanding the group work of private self-help groups dealing with alcoholic problems. In fiscal year 2008, guidance material for preventing drunk driving was prepared and the guidance was enhanced for probationers and parolees.

(5) Approach related to the businesses for correcting the drinking behavior

In Fukuoka city, following the accident of August 2006 due to drunk driving by a civil servant, one year later, another accident was caused by a civil servant. Hence, a "Fukuoka City Compliance Improvement Investigation Commission" was established in which external expertise was involved. This commission investigated the reasons and measures for misconduct from the viewpoint of work place climate, personnel affairs and organization management, and collected the information for the report in April 2008.

The report revealed that there were employees in the age group of 40 who had drinking habit problems and most of them had drunk driving history. In addition to the existing educational activities at various work places for drunk driving eradication, several activities were conducted with cooperation from medical institutions. These included guidance for acquisition of proper information about alcohol and support for changing the behavior for reasonable alcohol intake (HAPPY program), health guidance by occupational safety and health staff such as reasonable alcohol intake and encouragement to persons at high-risk for alcohol problems to receive a medical checkup. It was provided as a health project that included prevention of lifestyle-related diseases.

As a measure against drunk driving, with cooperation from Industrial health field, the activity in Fukuoka city is considered to be revolutionary since it deals with a personal problem of each individual, a drinking habit. Implementation of this activity in other local governments and enterprises is expected.

(6) Approach for automobile transportation operators

In the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, guidance was given about actual implementation of anti-drunk-driving manuals provided by operators organization. Guidance regarding popularization and proper usage of alcohol checkers was also given to automobile transportation operators.

(7) Investigation of utilization strategy of alcohol ignition interlock device

In the Cabinet Office, from fiscal year 2008, an anti-drunk driving survey for habitual drunk drivers along with the study of the utilization strategy of the alcohol ignition interlock device will be conducted with the cooperation of the Kurihama Alcoholism Center.

(8) Implementation of various investigations

From fiscal year 2008, the National Police Agency is to conduct investigation and research on the actual situation of habitual drunk drivers and the necessary safety measures. Moreover, in the Cabinet Office, investigation is to be conducted about the role of auto insurance (such as the role of insurance payment in case of drunk driving) that contributes to the eradication of drunk driving. This has been done simultaneously with the survey mentioned in above (7).



Source: Japan Automobile Research Institute

* Alcohol ignition interlock device

A device that assesses state of sobriety or drunkenness of the driver and, if drunk, prevents the engine from starting.