

News story: Life-saving drink drive law turns 50

Thousands of lives have been saved since the Department for Transport (DfT) introduced the maximum legal drink drive limit 50 years ago this weekend (7 October 2017).

The landmark Road Safety Act 1967 made it an offence to drive a vehicle with a blood alcohol concentration of over 80mg of alcohol per 100ml of blood – a limit which remains in place to this day.

This law made an important impact and since 1979, when official statistics first began, the number of drink drive deaths per year has plummeted from 1,640 right down to 200 in 2015 – a fall of 88%. We strive to further reduce this number by launching a new THINK! drink-drive campaign at the end of November 2017. THINK!, which reached its own 50th birthday in 2014, has successfully challenged a number of behaviours and attitudes to improve road safety, including drink driving. The iconic campaigns have helped reduce the number of deaths on British roads from 22 per day in the 1960s to the current level of 5.

Roads Minister Jesse Norman said:

This is a remarkable milestone, and I am proud of the work this department has done to reduce the number of deaths from drink driving over the last 50 years.

The change in attitudes to drink driving during this time has been profound, and there is little doubt that the introduction of the drink-drive limit helped to give us what remains one of the safest road networks in the world.

There is still much further to go, but we are making good progress. Our THINK! campaigns should help to reduce the number of drink drive incidents even further.

50 years of THINK! drink drive campaigns

RAC road safety spokesman Pete Williams said:

The introduction of a legal maximum limit for the amount of alcohol permissible in driver's blood has without doubt saved hundreds of lives on the UK's roads since 1967. The breathalyser is central to this as it gave police the ability to assess accurately at the roadside whether a driver was over the limit.

High-profile police drink-drive campaigns send strong messages to

motorists about the tragic consequences of driving under the influence of alcohol and let offenders know they will be caught and punished.

In 1967 DfT's predecessor, the Ministry of Transport, launched a major publicity campaign around the new act. The campaign comprised TV, film and newspaper advertising and saw millions of leaflets distributed with vehicle licences.

DfT previously marked 50 years of drink drive campaigning in 2014.