Alcohol Regulation: Impact on Traffic Safety

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Prevention of impaired driving depends in large part on deterring individuals from driving after drinking. Impaired driving can also be prevented by controlling and reducing the amount of alcohol that potential drivers drink. There is a growing body of research and practical experience that sheds light on the effects of alcohol regulation on impaired driving - as well as other alcohol related problems. This paper will summarize the current state of knowledge on the various forms of alcohol regulation and their impact on traffic safety. It will be based in part on discussions at a recent workshop of the US Transportation Research Board Committee on Alcohol, Other Drugs and Transportation, which brought together researchers and policy makers from around the world to discuss the state of knowledge regarding alcohol regulation and its impact on traffic safety.

The paper will present the traffic safety effects of:

- Controlling alcohol availability and access through limits on alcohol outlet location and density and the hours of sale
- Legal frameworks at the national, state, and local level
- Improving alcohol sales and service practices, including programs to enhance responsible beverage service
- Control of the price of alcoholic beverages
- The effects of minimum purchase age laws
- Enforcement strategies and barriers to enforcement

The paper will discuss gaps in current knowledge and the guidance that research can provide to policy makers. Comparisons of alcohol regulation in the United States, Europe, and developing countries will be included.

Keywords: Regulation, Alcohol sales, Traffic safety