



## AMHERST POLICE DEPARTMENT

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Combating impaired driving in our community has always been a priority for the Amherst Police Department. Our officers responded to 74 suspected impaired driving calls in 2012 resulting in 26 arrests. Police reported impaired driving incidents in Canada have declined since the 1980s; however incidents have been increasing since 2006. Canada has one of the highest rates of impairment among fatally-injured drivers but one of the lowest rates of per capita alcohol consumption rates among comparable developed countries. The financial costs for a person charged and convicted of impaired driving after trial can be upwards of \$32,000. This would include fines, license reinstatement, the alcohol interlock program, legal fees and insurance. According to a report put out by Mothers Against Drunk Driving, impaired driving cost Canadian tax payers 20.62 billion dollars in 2010. This large number factors in the costs associated to impaired related fatalities, injuries, property damage, traffic delays, hospital/health costs and emergency response costs.

Drivers can be charged for operating a vehicle under the influence of alcohol or a drug. Drugs include both legal prescriptions and illegal drugs such as marijuana and cocaine. Alcohol impairment remains the most common type of impaired driving. Drivers impaired by alcohol are more easily detected by officers in comparison of those impaired by drugs. Road side screening devices and instruments commonly referred to as the breathalyzer, provide information on blood alcohol readings that are accepted by the courts. This provides police officers with evidence that can establish the level of impairment of a person under the influence of alcohol. Over the past 4 years our department has taken steps to enhance the ability of our department to detect drivers who are impaired by drugs. 3 officers have been certified as Drug Recognition Experts (DRE), and several other officers have been certified in conducting Standard Field Sobriety Testing (SFST). The SFST officers are trained to detect drivers who are under the influence of drugs based on visual observations of the driver and a series of physical tests. If the driver fails the SFST testing a Drug Recognition Expert is called in to conduct a drug recognition examination. The results of the examination can and have been used in court to gain a conviction of impaired driving. Our DRE and SFST officers have contributed to the conviction of several drivers charged with operating a motor vehicle while impaired by a drug.

The public can be part of the solution. Plan ahead, and have a designated driver before you go out for the night. Be a true friend by taking the keys from a friend who should not be driving. The cell phone has created the ability for citizens to report impaired drivers from their own vehicles as they are actually watching the suspect vehicle. This is a trend that has seen significant growth over recent years and has been very effective in the detection and apprehension of impaired drivers. I have no doubt that the citizens who called the police have prevented serious injuries and the unnecessary loss of life.

Again this year the Amherst Police Department has partnered with the Cumberland County MADD chapter and other law enforcement agencies in helping promote awareness of the continuing issues of impaired driving. MADD will be holding their annual Red Ribbon Campaign today in Oxford. On November 15th, Cumberland County law enforcement agencies, emergency first responders, MADD and SADD groups will participate in a checkpoint to promote the dangers of impaired driving. Officers and volunteers will distribute MADD material and tying red ribbons on vehicles. The Amherst Police Department will also be conducting checkpoints as part of the provincial Operation Christmas campaign, throughout the holidays to combat impaired driving. Please show your support to MADD by tying the red ribbon on your vehicle and donating to our local Cumberland chapter. We may not be able to stop all impaired driving incidents, but we can stand together in helping limit its potential devastating impact on our communities.