

# This holiday season, tie one on to make a difference

*MADD Red Ribbon Campaign honours those who have been killed and reminds motorists to drive sober*

**H**ere we are at mid-December and really heading into the “eye” of the holiday season. For many, a quick scan of the calendar reminds us that between personal and work engagements we don’t have a weekend free until the second week of January. Hey, who knew you were so popular! Who knew eggnog could be so fattening! Oops, off topic.

Now, not to put a real downer on the festive mood we’ve established, there is a flip side to the term, “tie one on,” which is too often as much a part of the holidays as limited parking and really horrible dancing Santa dolls.

That’s where MADD Canada comes in with a reminder to play it safe over the holidays.

MADD Canada’s Project Red Ribbon launched its first campaign more than ten years ago in Windsor, Ontario. Now, over four million red ribbons are distributed across Canada during the holiday season.



**Road  
Wise**

**Paul  
Allen**

Each year, volunteers ask motorists to tie a red ribbon to a visible location on their vehicle. It’s known as “Tying One On for Safety”.

## **Personal commitment**

There are two good reasons to grab a ribbon and participate in the campaign. The first is to show respect for the thousands of Canadians who have lost their lives or have been injured due to alcohol-related crashes. The second reason is to remind yourself to drive sober through the holidays, and throughout the year. Think of tying a red ribbon to your vehicle as your personal commitment to driving sober.

There are more than enough

alternatives open to you: buses, taxis, designated drivers or Operation Red Nose. Everything is in place to help you keep your promise. Remember, planning for your evening is not complete until you have established a way for all concerned to get home safe and sound.

And here’s one more angle to consider before you head out for a little merrymaking. How is your babysitter getting home?

I mention this because my wife remembers back when (she refuses to say how long ago) she used to babysit over the holidays. She said she was often in the awkward position of being offered a ride home by an obviously intoxicated parent. Being one of those kids taught to respect adults, she didn’t refuse. There’s something to be said for the current trend of raising critically thinking children, now isn’t there.

At any rate, I did some homework and found a startling article in the

*Journal of American Medicine*: most children 14 and under killed in alcohol-related crashes are passengers in vehicles driven by intoxicated drivers. You read that right. Contrary to popular opinion, children are more likely to be killed (two thirds as likely, to be exact) as a passenger of a drinking driver than by drunk driver crashing in to them. And to toss another myth into the trash, more than two-thirds of those drinking drivers were not teenagers (the “usual suspects” for risky driving behaviour) but rather people old enough to be parents or caregivers.

## **More aware**

I, unfortunately, distinctly recall riding in the back seat as my parents drove home after this party or that gathering, and looking back now I realize there was no way they should have been behind the wheel. Thankfully, society is more educated, and more aware than they were. But

“more” is still not enough.

Please remember that ribbon, and what it means. Make a commitment to stay sober, not just for the safety of the motorists around you, but for your kids, or your babysitter, too. The danger you pose as a drinking driver, as the numbers prove, is just as great for those inside your car as those on the other side of the windshield.

Red Ribbon boxes are out in a number of locations across the province, including MLCC liquor outlets, Shoppers Drug Mart and Bank of Montreal. Your donations will help MADD Canada’s 35 national volunteer chapters keep up the fight against impaired driving which, in their words, is a “violent crime.”

Until next week, be **RoadWise**.

*Paul Allen is Road Safety Manager for Manitoba Public Insurance. He would like to hear from you. His e-mail address is [pallen@mpi.mb.ca](mailto:pallen@mpi.mb.ca) and his mailing address is Room 824, 234 Donald Street, Box 6300, Winnipeg, MB R3C 4A4.*