

Humble: You don't have to be drunk to be arrested for DUI

Contributed by Officer Mike Humble
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"But, Officer, I'm not drunk!"

I can't begin to count the times I've heard that same statement from people I've arrested for driving under the influence (DUI).

Driving under the influence is commonly referred to as "drunk driving," but you don't have to be drunk to be arrested for it.

There is a common misconception that if you're not "drunk," you're OK to drive. Officer Bruce Mulligan once told me, "The word 'drunk' has probably killed more people than any modern war."

The problem with the word is in its definition. Being drunk to some may mean you're unable to stand or even talk sensibly. What is difficult for many people to understand is the concept of being under the influence versus being drunk.

Some people are drunk when they are arrested for DUI, but a majority of those arrested are under the influence of alcohol. In both cases the violation is the same, driving under the influence.

Simply put, being under the influence means that you do not have the same mental capacity or motor control skills that someone who has not been drinking would have. As such, the person who is under the influence causes an unacceptable hazard to the motoring public.

How many drinks is under the influence? One, two, three ... height, weight, metabolism as well as the size of the drink is a factor. The law states that if your blood alcohol concentration is .08 percent or higher then you are definitely under the influence. You may be arrested at a .05 percent, up to .07 percent, depending on the nature and circumstances.

How do you avoid being arrested for DUI? Don't drink any alcohol before driving.

A good plan before going out, such as the Designated Driver plan, will not only spare you from being arrested, but can save your life or the life of another.

Don't let pride cloud your judgment and make you another statistic. If you find yourself in a situation, call a friend, call a taxi or make other arrangements to ensure that you don't drive. Officer Mike Humble works for the California Highway Patrol's Clear Lake office.

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