

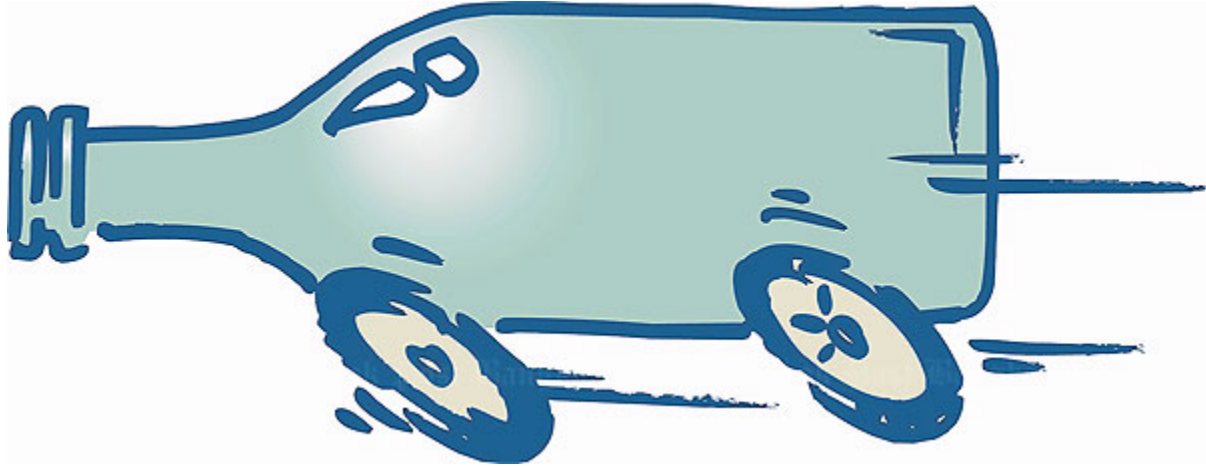
## Tipsy in traffic

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<http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/investigation/372049/tipsy-in-traffic>.

It's Monday night and you decided to have just one more pint with the lads before your commute home. What could go wrong? Now you're behind the wheel of your 5 Series on the inside lane of Sukhumvit Road with a police breathalyser stop 30m ahead, cars on all flanks and nowhere to go. The breath mints? They aren't going to help. Since you have Sunday's Spectrum in the pile beside you, why not read about what is in store for you while you wait to blow.



Thailand's drink-driving laws are similar to those in many jurisdictions and stricter than some. The Land Traffic Act BE 2522 (1979) and related regulations set out most of the drink-driving rules, while the PenalCode also includes some related penalties. Any driver with a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) over 0.05% (ie 0.5g of alcohol per litre of blood) is considered to be driving while intoxicated in Thailand. For anyone who has possessed their driving licence for less than five years, the BAC threshold is set even lower (0.02%).

A police officer is authorised to stop and test any driver whom they suspect of being intoxicated, most often by using a field sobriety or breathalyser test. If you fail to cooperate with the officer, such as by refusing to take a breathalyser test, you could \_ depending on the circumstances \_ be guilty of obstructing an official(which carries its own penalties) and be taken into custody for an arguably more intrusive urine or blood test. Blood tests are to be conducted at the nearest hospital under medical supervision. A urine test will be done at the police station. A regulation issued under the Land Traffic Act sets out the range of penalties that can be imposed for drunk-driving:

**A regulation issued under the Land Traffic Act sets out the range of penalties that can be imposed for drink-driving:**

Consequences	Drink-driving (no harm to others people)	Drink-driving + bodily harm (causes injury to the victim in body or mind)	Drink-driving + grievous bodily harm (causes grievous bodily harm to the victim)	Drink-driving + death of the victim
<b>Penalty</b>	Imprisonment of less than one year  Fine of 5,000 to 20,000 baht	Imprisonment of one to five years  Fine of 20,000 to 100,000 baht	Imprisonment of two to six years  Fine of 40,000 to 200,000 baht	Imprisonment of three to 10 years  Fine of 60,000 to 200,000 baht
<b>Suspension or revocation of driving licence</b>	Suspended for not at least six months or revocation of the licence	Suspension for at least one year or revocation the licence	Suspension for at least two years or revocation of the licence	Revocation of the licence

In addition, the court can order a drink-driver to submit to a rehabilitation programme a la Lindsay Lohan (lot of good that has done), to perform hours of public service and/or be on probation for a defined period. Note that the Bangkok police also posted photos of drink-drivers holding up their tickets on Facebook earlier this year as an exercise in public shaming, so penalties could be quite creative. Depending on the circumstances, if you are shown to be over the BAC limit and are taken into custody, you will probably be granted release on bail of 30,000 to 50,000 baht pending a formal hearing.

Even though there are many variables that will affect a person's BAC such as gender, weight, whether you've eaten, medications you're taking, etc, the UK's National Health Service has determined that one "unit" of alcohol is 10ml of pure alcohol: This being the amount of alcohol that an average person can process in one hour such that their BAC is zero at the end of the hour. The generally accepted amounts of pure alcohol in various types of drinks are:

12ml of pure alcohol in a standard shot of whiskey (30ml at 40% alcohol by volume).

16.5ml of pure alcohol in a standard bottle of beer (330ml at 5% alcohol by volume).

17.5ml of pure alcohol in a standard glass of wine (750ml bottle of wine; a conventional pour yields six glasses per bottle; at 14% alcohol by volume).

For example, my wife and I go to dinner where I have a beer at the bar and then we split a bottle of wine. I've now imbibed a total of 69ml of pure alcohol \_ or 6.9 units \_ assuming I didn't short-pour my wife. If I drank it all in the first few minutes, the theory is that it would be seven hours before my bloodstream was back at zero. However, the complexity lies in the fact that I actually drank it sporadically over a couple hours, continuous consumption slows the processing time, and my BAC target is 0.05, not 0.00.

Now back to our unfortunate driver. The police officer is motioning for you to roll down your window. It's 9.30pm and he's wearing sunglasses. You smell like Clorets-laced Guinness. Good luck. Impairment starts with the first drink, and you are in a city where the price of a taxi home is probably less than the price of that last pint of beer, so next time, don't be an idiot.

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