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## Drunk driving: women getting away with it

The UT Police are apparently more than fair to the fairer sex when it comes to checking them for drunk driving. Going by the records, police have found just two women enjoying the heady cocktail of drinking and driving last year as compared to just one in 2012. The number of women proceeded against for the offence is in sharp contrast to the ground reality as more and more women have been found consuming liquor liberally. Women have also been found vomiting on the roadside by police.

The number of women challaned is negligible, as the men challaned for the offence till August 25 last year were 2,478 and 3,094 for the corresponding period in 2012.

The high incidence of drinking among women can be gauged from the fact that in the recent past only two incidents were reported where high consumption of alcohol resulted in unconsciousness of school girls and vomiting by a couple of them on the roadside.

A lawyer on condition of anonymity says, "The phenomenon can be attributed to hesitation on part of police to check women for the offence or term it a sheer coincidence, but the fact remains that women are drinking and driving and still getting away with it."

The hesitation apparently stems from the fact that most of the times police peep inside the car before pulling out alco-sensors to see whether the driver is drunk or not. The police asking drivers to roll down the windows before sticking their neck in to sniff liquor is a common sight, a practice they find difficult to follow when it comes to women drivers.

The police admit that drinking in parties is no more considered a taboo among women and they do believe in independence when it comes to driving back home on their own.

"The past few years have seen more and more women coming out of their homes to attend parties and visit clubs where raising a toast is hardly considered out of place," says social activist Dr Pam Rajput. However, she adds, the number of challans issued to the women drivers have hardly witnessed a proportionate increase when it comes to checking drunk driving.

The police had stepped up its exercise against drunk driving after the Punjab and Haryana high court's intervention in the matter. Taking up a petition on smooth flow of traffic in the city and road safety, justice Rajive Bhalla of the high court had started monitoring the exercise undertaken by the Chandigarh Police against the menace. But apparently the women drivers never came under the high court radar.

### 'Police to take effective steps'

When contacted, SP (traffic) Manish Chaudhary said, "The police will now initiate effective steps for dealing with the problem. Women personnel will be deployed at the nakas in an attempt to apply brakes

on the practice of women mixing drinking with driving. At each barricade, five alco-sensors are being kept and challans would be issued without gender bias. For checking drunk driving, the Chandigarh traffic police have put to use 70 alco-sensors of which 10 have been distributed to the police station staff. The personnel in a police station can also check motorists for drunk driving.

### **Offender can be arrested**

The Chandigarh traffic police are also taking strict legal action against drunk driving as per Section 185 of the Motor Vehicle Act, 1988. Once the driver of the vehicle checked through alco-sensor (breath analyser) is found to have consumed alcohol more than the permissible limit, he can be challaned as per the law. In fact, a person can even be arrested for driving under the influence of alcohol (beyond the permissible limit).

### **Permissible limit**

According to police, 30 mg of alcohol per 100 ml of blood does not come under traffic violation. They added that 30 mg can be a beer or one peg. Alcohol content more than 30 mg can invite traffic challan, police said.

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