



Back-to-back tragedies spark demand for approach rethink

Ardhra.Nair@timesofindia.com

Pune: For a city celebrated for its cultural heritage and home to students, tech professionals and retirees, a spate of fatal accidents has sparked alarm. From last year's Porsche crash to the recent Kalyaninagar valet tragedy and the Hingewadi case where three children were killed by a bus, Pune has earned an unfortunate reputation for disregarding traffic norms — also evident in its lax helmet compliance.

Experts and retired police officers contended that penalties by themselves did not work and they must be paired with visible patrols, mobile roadblocks and continuous random inspections. They also called for compulsory alcohol testing of vehicle owners and contractors, with proper record-keeping.

Although the law allows a minimal blood-alcohol level, medical professionals warned that even a single drink could dangerously blunt reflexes. Academics recommended using technology such as in-vehicle systems that stop intoxicated drivers, provided policymakers mandate its use.

Vivek Velankar of Sajag Nagrik Manch said naming and shaming the offenders was the only way forward. "Fines no longer deter offenders. Enforcement must be impactful, especially near pubs and bars. Nakabandis should be mobile and unpredictable. Offenders should be publicly named on websites or banners. Police must innovate and vehicle owners should be held accountable," he said.

Awareness drives could complement enforcement but won't suffice, Ranjit Gadgil, programme director at NGO Parisar, said. "The only solution is frequent and random checks. We don't know how widespread this problem is because it's usually discovered after crashes. This cannot be enforced electronically. It needs on-ground policing. The law is stringent, but fear of being caught and prosecuted is the real deterrent," he said.

Senior police officers echoed this sentiment. "People must fear being caught and shamed," Praveen Dixit, former Maharashtra DGP, who

'ALCOHOL IMPAIRS DECISION-MAKING'

Experts said alcohol could lead to poor choices and more risk-taking behind the wheel. It tends to slow down information processing, taking a toll on attention and memory

EVEN SMALL AMOUNT MATTERS: EXPERTS

Any amount of alcohol can reduce cognitive and motor abilities, the experts said

Having said that, individual sensitivity varies. Factors like weight, gender, drinking habits and the type/concentration of drink influence impairment

FALSE SENSE OF SOBRIETY

This happens as the brain adapts to alcohol consumption, making people feel more sober than they actually are

Consequently, self-assessment declines with rise in intoxication, weakening the ability to judge one's own impairment, leading to under-estimation



Two techies killed after builder's son, 17, crashes Porsche into bike

Two techies, 34 and 35, were killed when a 17-year-old builder's son crashed his Porsche into a bike near Kalyaninagar pub. The incident occurred on May 20, 2024.

TOI report on May 20, 2024

Drunk techie driving off in a huff runs over valet near Kalyaninagar pub

A 34-year-old techie, who was driving a Porsche, ran over a valet near Kalyaninagar pub. The incident occurred on Dec 1, 2025.

TOI report on Dec 1, 2025

pioneered naming-and-shaming in Nagpur in 2008, said. "We published three bulletins daily, conducted nakabandis from early morning till late night and filed chargesheets without any delays. When we did it, road fatalities dropped that year. Visible policing is key and excuses like low manpower don't hold. Citizen groups, NSS or NCC cadets and even homemakers can assist," Dixit said.

He also urged IT firms and contractors to mandate alcohol checks for employees before

driving, saying delays were preferable to deaths.

The academicians proposed a tech-driven approach. "Alcohol interlocks that prevent vehicles from starting, in-cabin sensors to detect alcohol passively and AI-powered cameras monitoring facial expressions, eye movements and other intoxication indicators can help. These systems should be made mandatory to prevent fatalities," Ganesh Kandikar, dean, Innovation, Startups and Collaboration at MIT WPU, said.

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— Dr Danish H Memon | SENIOR CONSULTANT & HEAD OF DEPARTMENT OF MEDICINE, NOBLE HOSPITALS & RESEARCH CENTRE, HADAPSAR