

Emergency doctor warns of risk to road users amid reports of accidents involving drug abuse

Claudia Tan

Over a 12-day period in June, three men were charged with driving under the influence of drugs – their alleged crimes detected only after they were involved in accidents.

Two of the men are accused of having consumed methamphetamine or “Ice” when they were in control of their vehicles, while the third is said to have been driving under the influence of etomidate.

Etomidate is an anaesthetic that has been used in e-vaporisers, known as Kpods.

Clinical toxicologist Jonathan Tang, who is with the Emergency Medicine Department at the National University Hospital, said he has encountered a handful of patients presenting with traumatic injuries from road traffic accidents

under the influence of etomidate-laced vapes. “Similar to alcohol intoxication, etomidate use affects the user’s ability to drive and places them and other road users at risk,” he added.

Several reported traffic accidents in the last 16 months have been found to involve the use of drugs.

They include an incident in Punggol on May 13, 2025, when a car driven by a man, who had a female passenger, collided with a bus. Police officers discovered 42 vapes and more than 1,200 pods in the vehicle, with some containing etomidate.

The 28-year-old woman died as a result of the accident. Etomidate was found in the car driver’s and woman’s blood.

In February, MP Valerie Lee (Pasir Ris-Changi GRC) raised the issue in Parliament. She asked if the Traffic Police (TP), as part of their

standard protocol, assessed motorists involved in traffic accidents for vaping or drug use.

Minister for Home Affairs K. Shanmugam said that in the event of a traffic accident, TP will assess motorists for impaired driving.

“If TP suspects drug or etomidate use, a blood test will be required. Drivers may be liable for the offence of driving while under (the) influence,” he said.

In his reply, Shanmugam also revealed that there were 38 traffic accidents linked to drug and etomidate use between 2023 and 2025. Of these, 19 cases were fatal. Among the fatal cases, 10 involved drugs, while nine involved the use of etomidate, the police later said.

Of the 38 accidents, 29 had occurred in 2025 and 18 cases involved the use of etomidate, seven of which also involved the use of other drugs.

Tang said impairment from etomidate increases the risk of delayed reaction, poor hazard perception and loss of vehicle control.

“This not only endangers the driver but also significantly increases the risk of harm to passengers, pedestrians and other road users,” he said.

Tang added: “It has also been reported that etomidate Kpod use can induce psychiatric symptoms such as depressed mood, increased aggression and impulsivity, leading to suicide attempts. These effects significantly compromise the ability to safely operate a vehicle.”

Traffic deaths hit a 10-year high in 2025, with 149 killed, compared with 141 in 2016. There were 142 deaths in 2024. The number of injured people also increased, from 9,342 in 2024 to 9,955 in 2025.

The Straits Times has been run-

ning a series of stories to call on all road users to be more careful.

The recent alleged offenders in court include Mohamed Firdouz Mohamed Akram, who was handed multiple charges on June 19 including causing injuries to two people while driving in a dangerous manner in Kallang.

The 36-year-old was involved in a collision with a taxi, leaving the driver of the cab and a passenger injured. After the accident, Firdouz abandoned his car and fled.

He was arrested later and found to have consumed Ice. Police said drugs, vaporisers and weapons were found in his vehicle.

On June 10, Puaah Zhe Cong was handed seven charges under the Road Traffic Act, including dangerous driving causing death and failing to stop after the accident.

The 34-year-old, who allegedly consumed etomidate, is accused of causing one death and two injuries while driving under the influence of drugs.

On June 8, Sivakandesh, 32, was charged in court with several offences, including driving while under the influence of methamphetamine, after his Mercedes-Benz

crashed into a rubbish chute in Yishun Street 11.

The car struck two concrete bollards, a parked vehicle and a rubbish chute before coming to a stop.

In a separate case, Jessica Ang Kai Kai on June 19 pleaded guilty to a total of eight charges for traffic- and vape-related offences. The 26-year-old, whose charges include abetting her husband in committing a string of traffic offences, was arrested with another woman after a police chase near Jalan Besar Road at about 5.50am on June 29, 2025.

Ang, who drove the car, later tested positive for Ice. The incident happened just minutes after her husband – a wanted man – was arrested near the Mustafa Centre. Ang will be sentenced on June 29.

In their statement on June 18, the police said that driving under the influence of drugs is an extremely dangerous and irresponsible act.

“The police will take firm action against motorists who drive under the influence of drugs, psychoactive substances, intoxicating substances or alcohol.”

claudiatan@sph.com.sg