



FACT SHEET

Office of National Drug Control Policy

Executive Office of the President

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Reducing Drugged Driving and Protecting Public Health and Safety

Thanks to increased public awareness and effective law enforcement, Americans have seen a significant drop in the prevalence of drunk driving over the past several decades. Today, amid increasing concern about all forms of hazardous and distracted driving, the Obama Administration is focusing on the growing problem of drugged driving, or driving after drug use. Working with the Department of Transportation (DOT) and other Federal agencies, the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) is taking steps to address the issue.

Drugged driving poses threats to public safety, as evidenced by the number of fatal crashes each year on our highways. Law enforcement officials see the tragedies that too often result when people take drugs and drive. Fortunately, trained Drug Recognition Experts can help to identify drugged drivers and make our roadways safer.

Research demonstrates that drugs, even those prescribed by a physician, can impair perception, judgment, motor skills, and memory – critical skills for safe and responsible driving. Recent surveys have shown how pervasive drugged driving has become in the United States.

Weekend Nighttime Drivers Testing Positive For Drugs, by Drug Category

Drug Category	Percentage
Illegal	11.3%
Medications	3.9%
Illegal & Medications	1.1%
<i>Total</i>	16.3%

Source: 2007 National Roadside Survey of Alcohol and Drug Use by Drivers: Drug Results, U.S. Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, December 2009.

Note: "Medications" includes prescription and over-the-counter drugs. Percentages are weighted. Results are based on oral fluid and blood testing; 83.7 percent of drivers tested negative for drugs.

Number of drivers tested: 5,910

Compelling Evidence

The National Roadside Survey of Alcohol and Drug Use by Drivers,¹ a nationally representative survey by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), found that 16 percent of weekend nighttime drivers (roughly 1 in 6) tested positive for illicit drugs or medications in 2007 (see chart, above). Moreover, approximately 1 in 8 high school seniors responding to the 2011 Monitoring the Future (MTF) survey reported driving after smoking marijuana within two weeks prior to the survey interview.² Equally disturbing are 2011 results from the National

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Survey on Drug Use and Health indicating that 9.3 million Americans aged 16 or older reported driving under the influence of illicit drugs in the past year.³

Data from NHTSA's Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) show that 1 in 3 deceased drivers with known drug-test results tested positive for drugs (illegal substances as well as over-the-counter and prescription medications). Fatally injured drivers under age 35 are over-represented in drug-involved crashes; they represent about 40 percent of all fatally injured drivers but 46 percent of *drug-involved* fatally injured drivers.^{4,5}

Marijuana is frequently involved in fatal traffic crashes and drugged driving in general. In 2009, marijuana accounted for 25 percent of all positive drug tests for fatally injured drivers for whom drug-test results were known and 43 percent among fatalities involving drivers 24 years of age and younger with known drug-test results.⁶ In a study published in the journal *BMJ*,⁷ Canadian researchers found that driving under the influence of marijuana significantly increases the risk of motor vehicle collisions, especially fatal collisions, compared with unimpaired driving.

The Administration's Response

The Obama Administration recognizes the seriousness of the issue and is taking steps to reduce drugged driving. For example, President Obama has drawn much-needed attention to the issue of drugged driving by declaring December National Impaired Driving Prevention Month in 2010, 2011, and 2012. The President's goal is to reduce drugged driving by 10 percent by 2015. To reach this mark, the Administration is working to advance initiatives to improve public awareness, enhance law enforcement training, improve screening methodologies, and collect more comprehensive data to support effective policy-making.

Addressing the Public Safety Threat

The Administration continues to support successful substance-abuse prevention programs, combined with public education and penalties for those who fail to comply with the law, as important tools to reduce the public safety threat of drugged driving.

These include two DOT initiatives:

- *Over the Limit. Under Arrest* – an effort to reduce impaired driving. Visit online at <http://www.nhtsa.gov/StopImpairedDriving>
- *The Drug Evaluation and Classification (DEC) Program*, which aids state and local jurisdictions in detecting and arresting drugged drivers. The DEC program also provides training to prosecutors and judges in the prosecution of drugged drivers. Visit online at <http://www.decp.org/>

More information about these programs can be found online at <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov>.

Other Federal programs focus on drug abuse prevention, including the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign, which offers free online resources to help prevent drugged, drunk, and distracted driving among teenagers, and the Drug-Free Communities Support program, which helps communities identify and respond to local substance abuse problems.

- National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/ondcp/drugged-driving>
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/ondcp/anti-drug-media-campaign>

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- Drug-Free Communities Support Program
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/ondcp/Drug-Free-Communities-Support-Program>

***Per Se* Drug Impairment Laws**

- States are considering enhanced legal responses, such as *per se* (“zero tolerance”) laws.
- If an individual is stopped for driving erratically and tests positive for a drug, *per se* laws make it easier to keep that driver off the road.
- Seventeen states already have *per se* statutes.
- ONDCP is working to educate and provide technical assistance to states advancing *per se* legislation.

Strengthening Partnerships

- In October 2011, the Administration convened a drugged driving summit that brought together a wide coalition of stakeholders.
- MADD has launched a national effort to provide support to the victims of poly-substance abuse (both alcohol and drugs) and drugged driving.
- RADD: The Entertainment Industry’s Voice for Road Safety is working to raise awareness of the dangers of drugged driving and to produce educational programming for youth.
- ONDCP Director Gil Kerlikowske addressed the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) during its Substance-Impaired Driving Forum in May 2012. NTSB announced that Substance-Impaired Driving would be one of its top advocacy priorities.
- In August 2012, the Governors Highway Safety Association announced its support of drugged driving *per se* laws and enhanced penalties for driving under the influence of multiple drugs.
- ONDCP and the National Association of Drug Court Professionals have been working together to increase drug court and DWI court professionals’ awareness and understanding of the prevalence of drugged driving in their jurisdictions.
- Drug and DWI courts can provide an intervention point for identifying substance use disorders and linking court clients with evidence-based treatment services, which help address problems relevant to a client’s psychological, social, or legal state. Treatment promotes behavior change and helps individuals abstain from using drugs and maintain a drug-free lifestyle in their workplaces, communities, and behind the wheel.

Educating Parents & Communities

- Educating parents and youth about the dangers of drugged driving is an essential component in the effort to prevent drugged driving.
- The Administration has developed a Drugged Driving Toolkit, available at http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/ondcp/issues-content/drugged_driving_toolkit.pdf.
 - The Drugged Driving Toolkit provides tips for parents of teen drivers, sample community activities to raise public awareness, and resources to help teens reject negative influences.

Increased Training for Law Enforcement

- Law enforcement plays a critical role in reducing drugged driving.

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- The Advanced Roadside Impaired Driving Enforcement program (ARIDE) is a 16-hour training course that gives officers additional skills to recognize signs and symptoms of drugs other than alcohol.
- The Administration is developing an online version of ARIDE that will make it more accessible to law enforcement officers and prosecutors.

Improving & Collecting Data

- Research initiatives will enhance understanding of drugged driving and guide policymakers.
- The next iteration of the National Roadside Survey, typically conducted every 10 years, has been accelerated so data will be available to assess the Nation's drugged driving goal in 2015.
- NHTSA is conducting a study to estimate the risk of being involved in a crash after having consumed drugs (both illegal drugs and prescription medications). Data collection for the study is complete, and results are expected in 2013.
- The Administration is supporting driving-simulator research to examine driving impairment as a result of marijuana and combined marijuana and alcohol use and correlate the findings with the results of oral fluid testing.

Seeking Local Solutions

Much more can be done at the state and local levels:

- States can explore legal responses, such as *per se* laws that make it illegal for individuals to drive with illicit drugs in their system. This not only will keep drugged drivers off the road, it will hold them accountable and encourage them to get treatment so they can lead a drug-free life.
- Doctors can help by learning to recognize patients with substance-use problems and by talking to patients about such issues.
- Parents can talk to their children about the consequences of alcohol and illicit drug use.

For more information about efforts to keep drugged drivers off the road, visit ONDCP's Drugged Driving Web page at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/ondcp/drugged-driving>.

Notes

¹ U.S. Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. 2007 National Roadside Survey of Alcohol and Drug Use by Drivers: Drug Results (2009). Available at <http://www.nhtsa.gov/Driving+Safety/Research+&+Evaluation/2007+National+Roadside+Survey+of+Alcohol+and+Drug+Use+by+Drivers>

² Institute for Social Research, the University of Michigan. 2011 Monitoring the Future survey.

³ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality. National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2002-2011. Unpublished special tabulations (October 2012).

⁴ U.S. Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS). Available at <http://www.nhtsa.gov/FARS>

⁵ National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (2010). Drug Involvement of Fatally Injured Drivers, DOT HS 811 415. Available at <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/Pubs/811415.pdf>

⁶ Office of National Drug Control Policy. (October 2011). Drug Testing and Drug-Involved Driving of Fatally Injured Drivers in the United States: 2005-2009. Available at http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/ondcp/issues-content/fars_report_october_2011.pdf

⁷ Asbridge, M; Hayden, J.; Cartwright, J. (2012). Acute cannabis consumption and motor vehicle collision risk: systematic review of observational studies and meta-analysis, *BMJ* 201;344:e536. Available at <http://www.bmj.com/content/344/bmj.e536>