



# FACT SHEET

## Office of National Drug Control Policy

Executive Office of the President

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## Working to Reduce Drugged Driving and Protect 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 distracted driving, including text messaging and cell phone usage, the government 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 highlight the problem.

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, hold them accountable, and get them off the road and into treatment.

It is well known 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>	<b>16.3%</b>

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, 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.

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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.

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 and 43 percent among fatalities involving drivers 24 years of age and younger. In a recent study published in the journal *BMJ*, 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 NHTSA roadside report can be found online at [www.nhtsa.dot.gov](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov). More information about FARS is available at [www.nhtsa.gov/FARS](http://www.nhtsa.gov/FARS) and in the ONDCP report *Drug Testing and Drug-Involved Driving of Fatally Injured Drivers in the United States: 2005-2009*, available online at [http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/ondcp/issues-content/fars\\_report\\_october\\_2011.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/ondcp/issues-content/fars_report_october_2011.pdf).

Monitoring the Future is available at [www.monitoringthefuture.org](http://www.monitoringthefuture.org). The Canadian study, "Acute cannabis consumption and motor vehicle collision risk: systematic review of observational studies and meta-analysis," can be found at <http://www.bmj.com/content/344/bmj.e536>.

## ***Addressing the Public Safety Threat***

Successful substance-abuse prevention programs, combined with public education and penalties for those who fail to comply with the law, will continue to receive support in the effort to reduce the public safety threat of drugged driving.

These include two DOT initiatives:

- *Over the Limit. Under Arrest* – an effort to crack down on impaired driving.
- *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.

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

## ***The Administration's Response***

The Obama Administration recognizes the seriousness of the threat and is taking steps to reduce drugged driving. In 2010 and 2011, for example, President Obama drew much-needed attention to the issue of drugged driving by declaring December National Impaired Driving Prevention Month. 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 policy-making.

### ***Per Se Drug Impairment Laws***

- The Administration encourages states to pursue enhanced legal responses, such as *per se* ("zero tolerance") laws.

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- 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.
- During this summit, Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) and the Administration announced an unprecedented partnership to raise public awareness regarding the consequences of drugged driving.
- MADD has launched a national effort to provide support to the victims of poly-substance abuse (both alcohol and drugs) and drugged driving.

### **Educating Parents & Communities**

- Educating parents and youth about the dangers of drugged driving is an essential component to preventing drugged driving.
- The Administration released a Drugged Driving Toolkit, available at [http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/ondcp/issues-content/drugged\\_driving\\_toolkit.pdf](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.
- 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, to be complete in August 2012, that will make it more accessible to officers.

### **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).
- 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.

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## *Federal Prevention Programs*

Other Federal programs focus on drug abuse prevention, such as 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.

### *Web sites:*

- National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign  
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/ondcp/anti-drug-media-campaign>
- Drug Free Communities Support Program  
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/ondcp/Drug-Free-Communities-Support-Program>

## *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.



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