



IMPAIRED DRIVING

Task Force Newsletter



Pieces of a Complicated Puzzle

By Troy Walden, PhD, Director of Center for Alcohol and Drug Education Studies

Recently, I was asked, “how do you make an impact in reducing impaired driving?”

After giving it some thought, I realized that, as an individual, I can’t make a significant impact. That’s not to say that what I do doesn’t have merit. Real impact comes when individuals work in partnership and contribute to a larger mission.

A few months back I had the privilege to work with District Attorney’s (DA) Office in Wichita County, Texas. Their office had a case that involved a four-year old boy who was killed in a Driving While Intoxicated (DWI) crash a few days before Christmas. The toddler was at school celebrating with his classmates, visiting Santa, and living in the moment of the season. His holiday dreams ended soon after he was picked up from school. People who were supposed to make sure he got home safely instead chose to pick him up after a day of drinking. His mother and her best friend picked him and several other children up from school then drove home while intoxicated.

The women began drinking heavily at 10 AM on the day of the crash. To them, it was time to celebrate the end of the fall semester for the children. After con-



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suming a pint of Hennessy along with several beers and wine coolers, mom’s friend drove them to school, parked in the parking lot, and ultimately passed out while waiting for mom to return with the children. When the children arrived back at the vehicle, mom’s friend started the engine, placed it in drive, and sped away. No one was seat belted, none of the four children were secured in child safety seats, and the driver’s BAC was 0.20.

Thirty minutes later, the crash occurred when the driver attempted to negotiate a highway curve while traveling at 103 miles per hour. The vehicle left the roadway and flipped multiple times coming to rest in a ditch. All the children were ejected, mom was pinned beneath the vehicle, and her little boy was dead.

> Continued on page 2



Continued: Pieces of a Complicated Puzzle

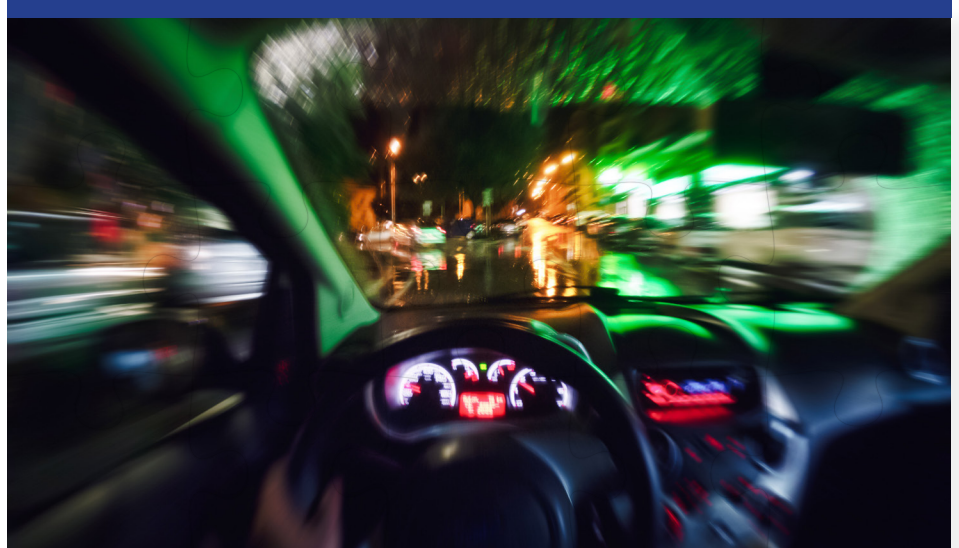
To ensure that justice was served, impaired driving partners and experts came together to assist the DA's office with gaining a conviction for felony murder. The complexity of the case required input from a diverse group of professionals. Without this collaborative effort along with the knowledge, skills, and abilities of law enforcement, toxicology, extrapolation experts, and a well-prepared prosecution team, the State would have struggled telling this tragic story and putting their trial strategy into practice.

The ability to collaborate is an essential skill that dramatically influences positive outcomes and support for innovative approaches. While most impaired driving professionals recognize the value that collaboration "brings to the table", many still struggle with finding ways to put it into practice.

Metaphorically, we can think of individual and collaborative efforts like an orchestra. When the orchestra is warming up just before the performance, the musicians are playing as individuals and the resulting sound is an uncoordinated combination of tones and notes. Once the conductor begins to direct the symphony, the musicians coalesce, and their sounds synchronize into meaningful music.

Collaboration is defined as a set of behaviors driven by the shared belief that people working together create better results than individuals working alone. Being proactive instead of reactive, sharing ideas and information, co-creating solutions, and trusting feedback in an open and constructive forum form its foundation.

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harness our collaborative energy to create clear visions, focus on results, provide frameworks, incentivize achievements, and remove obstacles that block success. To accomplish this, individuals must align with others and contribute their own personal knowledge, skills, and abilities toward the exchange of ideas, establishing trust, and building solutions together.

In the Wichita County case, the DA's office was able to develop a trial strategy that connected each individual expert's strengths. First responders collected and logged crash information, witness statements, and evidence. Crash reconstructionist analyzed evidence and determined driving elements clearly dangerous to human life, calculated speeds, and described how the crash transpired. Source investigators determined alcohol purchases, consumption locations, and constructed timelines. Toxicologists determined the level of alcohol in the driver's blood at the time

of sample draws. The extrapolation expert determined blood alcohol concentration levels at different times based upon absorption and elimination rates.

The effective resolution of this case serves as an example of how collaboration can work to address impaired driving in a particular situation. How do we, as impaired driving stakeholders, parlay productive collaboration in isolated instances into a coordinated, integrated approach to eliminate roadway fatalities due to alcohol and other drugs? It cannot happen if we continue to work only in parallel. We need to ensure the product of our efforts is greater than the sum of the parts aka moving beyond a group of projects to an integrated approach to address a complex problem. Today this concept is referred to as synergy and it doesn't happen on its own. Let's work together to identify the best ways to fit all our pieces (initiatives) together to complete the puzzle and save lives.

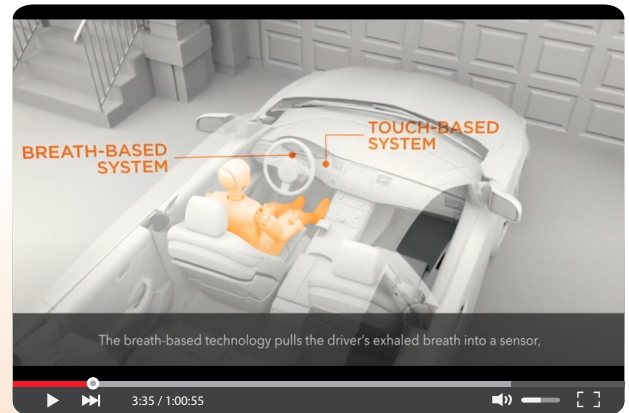


2022 Texas Impaired Driving Forum

The 2022 Texas Impaired Driving Forum was held on February 23, 2022. All sessions were recorded and can be viewed on the TxIDTF website here: <https://www.texasimpaireddrivingtaskforce.org/forum/2022-impaired-driving-forum/>

Thank you to everyone who made this event a success!

Planning for the 2023 Forum will begin in October. Please contact [Christine](#) or [Emmy](#) if you have suggestions for speakers.



RECENTLY PUBLISHED ABSTRACTS AND STUDIES

- [Drugged driving investigation workflow and oral fluid testing used around the world: Survey results of SOFT/AAFS Drugs and Driving and Oral Fluid Committees](#)
- [Increasing incidence of Xylazine as a toxic adulterating substance in postmortem forensic toxicology casework](#)
- [What determines the success of states in reducing alcohol related crash fatalities? A longitudinal analysis of alcohol related crashes in the U.S. from 1985 to 2019](#)
- [Rating the comparative efficacy of state-level cannabis policies on recreational cannabis markets in the United States](#)

Essential Education on Marijuana

Essential Education on Marijuana

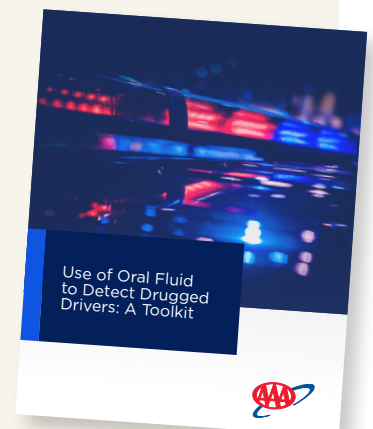
The landscape of marijuana legalization is rapidly changing in the United States. It is important to understand how this policy reform has impacted communities where the drug has been legalized for medical or recreational use. This FREE training describes the basics of marijuana impairment, common misconceptions, the current state of legalization efforts across the country, Texas laws, and how to help prevent marijuana impaired driving.

Please contact the Project Manager, Cody Stewart, to be among the first to gain access to this new course!
Cody Stewart: C-Stewart@tti.tamu.edu



RECENTLY PUBLISHED RESOURCES

- [GHSA Publication – Cannabis Consumers and Safe Driving: Responsible Use Messaging](#)
- [AAA Publication – Use of Oral Fluid to Detect Drugged Drivers: A Toolkit](#)
- [NHTSA Publication – Characteristics of State Law Enforcement Liaison Programs: Survey Results](#)
- [NHTSA Publication – Synthesis of Studies That Relate Amount of Enforcement to Magnitude Of Safety Outcomes](#)





RECENT NEWS



Texas News

- [TxDOT & law enforcement launch anti-drunk driving labor day campaign](#)
- [4 dead, including 2 children, after suspected drunk driver crashes into golf cart in Texas](#)
- [Texas teen killed, father injured after suspected drunk driver crashes into home, police say](#)
- [Sheriff: Drunk driver struck, killed Smith County deputy](#)
- [Scooter crash marks Galveston's 5th death in DUI wrecks in over a week](#)



Please welcome our new member:

Katie Mueller

Program Manager

Our Driving Concern –

National Safety Council



National News

- [NHTSA launches Labor Day 'Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over' campaign](#)
- [Bentley's law requiring child support to surviving children of parents killed by drunk driver](#)
- [Texas Sen. John Cornyn raises privacy concerns over drunk driving prevention tech in cars](#)
- [Toyota Safety Research Center in Ann Arbor adds four projects \(assessing driver alcohol and drug impairment\)](#)

Texas Impaired Driving Assessment

The Texas Impaired Driving Assessment, conducted through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) Technical Assessment Program, was held this year through a hybrid model. The Impaired Driving Assessment is intended to enhance the effectiveness of Texas's alcohol-impaired driving program in preventing injuries, saving lives, and reducing economic costs of motor vehicle crashes on Texas roadways. The in-person portion was held in Austin, Texas, August 15th–19th. The Texas Impaired Driving Assessment report will be completed by September 30th and sent to the TxIDTF membership.



Thank you to all the subject matter experts on the Texas Impaired Driving Task Force who contributed to information collection and testimony in Austin! Without you all we would not have been able to provide the information necessary to construct a meaningful assessment report. Your contributions are sincerely appreciated!



UPCOMING EVENTS

SEPTEMBER

- [Texas DRE: Harris County Drug Recognition Expert Recertification](#)
September 12 | Harris County Sheriff's Academy
- [Texas DRE: Williamson County Drug Recognition Expert Recertification](#)
September 14 | Williamson County Sheriff's Academy
- [Texas DRE: Carrollton, TX Drug Recognition Expert Recertification](#)
September 16 | Carrollton Police Department
- [BVIPC: Red Class](#)
September 27 | Virtual

Please email Maryjo.prince@ag.tamu.edu or pamela.todaro@ag.tamu.edu to register



OCTOBER

- [BVIPC: Red Class](#)
October 1 | 1470 William D. Fitch Parkway, College Station, TX
- [Texas DRE: San Antonio, TX Drug Recognition Expert Recertification](#)
October 4 | San Antonio Police Training Academy
- [Texas DRE: Humble, TX Drug Recognition Expert Recertification](#)
October 5 | Harris County Sheriff's Academy
- [Texas DRE: El Paso, TX Drug Recognition Expert Recertification](#)
October 10 | El Paso County 911
- [DITEP: Denton 8-HR DITEP](#)
October 11 | Denton Police Department
- [Texas DRE: College Station, TX ARIDE](#)
October 12 | College Station Police Department
- [BVIPC: Red Class](#)
October 15 | 1470 William D. Fitch Parkway, College Station, TX

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- [TxSFST: Hondo 8-HR Advanced DWI Course](#)
October 18 | South Texas Regional Training Center
- [Texas DRE: Houston, TX Drug ARIDE](#)
October 19 | Northwest Volunteer Fire Department
- [TxSFST: Bexar 8-HR Advanced DWI Course](#)
October 20 | Bexar County Law Enforcement Annex
- [Texas DRE: Corpus Christi, TX ARIDE](#)
October 27 | Texas Department of Public Safety
- [TxSFST: Edinburg 8-HR Advanced DWI Course](#)
October 28 | LCPL Derek Hernandez Police Training Facility





UPCOMING EVENTS



NOVEMBER

- [DITEP: Hutto 8-HR DITEP](#)
November 1 | Hutto ISD
 - [BVIPC: Red Class](#)
November 10 | Virtual
- Please email Maryjo.prince@ag.tamu.edu or pamela.todaro@ag.tamu.edu to register
- [Texas DRE: Fort Worth ARIDE](#)
November 14 | Fort Worth Police Department
 - [TxSFST: Refugio 24-HR SFST Practitioner Course](#)
November 15 | Refugio Police Department
 - [Texas DRE: El Paso ARIDE](#)
November 16 | El Paso County 911
 - [Texas DRE: Midland Drug Recognition Expert Recertification](#)
November 18 | Midland County Sheriff's Office
 - [TxSFST: Ballinger 8-HR SFST Refresher Course](#)
November 29 | Ballinger Police Department
 - [TxSFST: Ballinger 8-HR Advanced DWI Course](#)
November 30 | Ballinger Police Department

DECEMBER

- [Texas DRE: Del Rio ARIDE](#)
December 5 | Del Rio Police Department
- [TxSFST: Harris 24-HR SFST Practitioner Course](#)
December 6 | Harris County Deputies Organization
Fraternal Order of Police Lodge 39

JANUARY

- [Texas DRE: New Braunfels ARIDE](#)
January 5 | New Braunfels Police Department
- [Texas DRE: Beeville ARIDE](#)
January 11 | Bee County Sheriff's Office



If you would you like to add anything to the next edition of the newsletter, please send your information to c-adams@tti.tamu.edu or e-shields@tti.tamu.edu by January 1, 2023.

Submissions are due the 1st of each newsletter month, and will be distributed next on January 15, 2023.