



IMPAIRED DRIVING

Task Force Newsletter



Save a Life™
Texas Department of Transportation

Texas Impaired Driving Task Force Recognition

The Texas Impaired Driving Task Force was honored in November with the John W. Britt Community Service Award by the National Liquor Law Enforcement Association for its outstanding commitment to reducing impaired driving fatalities in Texas. The nomination was submitted by Deputy Chief David Doggett, from the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission. This prestigious recognition is awarded to an individual or organization that has demonstrated an exceptional commitment to public safety, collaborative partnerships, and impactful community service.

Partner organization, Texans for Safe and Drug-Free Youth, was also recognized for their advocacy on alcohol-to-go legislation and their efforts at the 89th Texas Legislature.



Accepting the John W. Britt Community Service Award from left to right: Christine Adams, Texas A&M Transportation Institute (TTI); Nicole Holt, Texans for Safe and Drug-Free Youth; David Doggett, Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission; and Larry Krantz, Texas Department of Transportation.
Photo Credit: Cinthya Fillips, TTI



★ Congratulations! ★

“For an extraordinary dedication to reducing and eliminating deaths and injuries caused by impaired driving in Texas. Your work as a partnership of impaired driving safety stakeholders representing law enforcement, prosecution, prevention, advocacy, education, treatment, research, alcohol service, driver licensing, employers, public health, and more embodies the spirit of this award.”



At the November 6, 2025, meeting of the Texas Impaired Driving Task Force, members discussed the following topics:

Judicial & Legislative Updates

Judge Weiser, Judicial Resource Liaison, provided an overview of significant judicial changes, including:

- **New bond requirements under [Senate Bill \(SB\) 9](#)** effective April 2026, which will shift more felony bail decisions to District Judges.
- **[Article 17.027, Code of Criminal Procedure \(CCP\)](#):** Counties must be notified by the next business day if a felony arrest occurs while the defendant is out on a felony bond. This requirement takes effect January 1, 2026.
 - **Bond Review After Arrest:** Courts are required to consider revoking, modifying, or re-evaluating a prior felony bond after a new arrest. This provision becomes effective April 1, 2026.
- **District Judge Authority:** District Judges will assume more responsibility for felony bail and bond decisions instead of magistrates, and training for judges is planned.
 - **[Chapter 54, Government Code \(GC\)](#):** Magistrates cannot release a defendant on bail if the person is charged with a felony and was already on bail, parole, or supervision for another felony, has two or more prior felony convictions with time served in TDCJ, or is under an immigration detainer.
 - **Restrictions on Bail for Certain Charges:** Magistrates cannot grant bail for defendants charged with murder, capital murder, aggravated kidnapping, or aggravated sexual assault.



- **[Article 17.029, CCP](#):** District Judges may review bail decisions made by magistrates who do not have trial jurisdiction over the felony charge.
 - » **No Personal Bond Allowed:** Personal bonds are prohibited for defendants charged with fentanyl murder, unlawful possession of a firearm by a felon, terroristic threat (Class A or higher), unlawful firearm possession, or those on parole at the time of a new offense.
- **[Article 17.151, CCP](#):** Defendants must be released if the state is not ready for trial within specific timeframes—90 days for felonies, 30 days for Class A misdemeanors, and 15 days for Class B misdemeanors.
- **[Article 17.09, Section 3 CCP Amended](#):** Judges may re-order an arrest if the bond is defective, excessive, insufficient, has unacceptable sureties, or for other good and sufficient cause.
- **[Article 17.092, CCP](#):** Magistrates cannot reduce a bond set by a District Judge. Only higher courts or District Judges may modify such bonds.

Newsletter Additions

If you would like to add anything to the next edition of the newsletter, please send your information to c-adams@tti.tamu.edu or c-hrncir@tti.tamu.edu.



Education & Prevention Subcommittee

Emma Dugas, representing Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), highlighted the Task Force's education and prevention initiatives, focusing on collaboration with school resource officers and broader community outreach.

Current plans include creating infographics and launching public education campaigns by the end of the year, while working closely with the Alcohol and Cannabis Subcommittee to ensure consistent messaging. Looking ahead, the team is exploring opportunities to present at the Texas School Resource Officer Conference in July 2026 to further engage stakeholders and strengthen impaired driving prevention strategies. The subcommittee will also collaborate with the alcohol and cannabis subcommittee to disseminate information to communities.

November TxIDTF Meeting Updates, Continued.

THC Regulation

The meeting also addressed increasing concerns about THC regulation. Misleading labeling, lack of oversight, and impaired driving risks were highlighted, and education campaigns are planned to raise awareness.



Editorial photo credit: Adobe Stock/Shortt

State agencies are actively developing new rules for THC products, and the public comment period is now open. Please see the link to the proposed rules from [TABC on Consumable Hemp Products](#).

To provide public comment, please see the instructions below:

TABC requests comments on the proposed rules from any person interested in the rules. Additionally, TABC requests information related to the cost, benefit, or effect of the proposed rules, including any applicable data, research, or analysis, from any person required to comply with the proposed rules or any other interested person.

Written Comments:

- TABC will consider any **written comments** on the proposal that are received by TABC **no later than 5:00 p.m., CST, January 4, 2026**.
 - There are two different ways to submit **written comments**:
 1. Email your comments to rules@tabc.texas.gov, or
 2. Mail your comments to:
Office of the General Counsel, Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission
P.O. Box 13127
Austin, Texas 78711-3127

2025 Texas Impaired Driving Plan

The TxIDTF, in partnership with TxDOT has released the 2025 Texas Impaired Driving Plan. You can find a copy of the annual strategic plan [here](#).

**Traffic Safety Regulation**

Clay Abbott, Texas' Traffic Safety Resource Prosecutor, delivered Legislative updates included:

- [SB 745](#), which elevates intoxication manslaughter to an aggravated first-degree felony when multiple deaths occur, and
- [SB 826](#), which makes DWI in school zones a state jail felony.
- [Grayson's Law, House Bill \(HB\) 2017](#) introduces stricter penalties for repeat intoxication offenders who are unlawfully present in the U.S.

Toxicology

Toxicology updates focused on several key areas, including the implementation of a new THC testing method and plans to recalibrate breath alcohol testing devices in 2026–2027. Trevis Beckworth, Assistant Laboratory Director for the Texas Department of Public Safety Crime Laboratory, addressed the significant backlog of approximately 50,000 toxicology evidence items.

Under a new law, laboratories must notify prosecutors annually about all evidence they hold and request instructions; if prosecutors do not respond with a written denial, labs may destroy the evidence after 90 days. Labs would prefer to partner with prosecutors to clarify which evidence can be destroyed with the ultimate goal that if destruction is permissible, prosecutors will inform the labs promptly.

To reduce the backlog and improve turnaround times, labs have hired additional staff and proposed a forensic internship program ([SB1620](#)).

STOP Testing Procedures

Chris Heartsill, Regional Toxicology Liaison, also reviewed NHTSA's push to end "stop testing" policies, which could have major resource implications. Many labs are raising the threshold for ceasing alcohol testing from a BAC of 0.10 to 0.15, and potential changes include increasing this threshold further, expanding testing to cases involving live victims with bodily injury, and broadening categories excluded from testing.





November TxIDTF Meeting Updates, Continued.

Oral Fluid Testing

Oral fluid testing was highlighted as an effective tool for detecting drugged driving and is a core initiative of the National Alliance to Stop Impaired Driving, an organization founded with support from [Responsibility.org](https://responsibility.org) to address impaired driving. The presentation emphasized national research and pilot programs, including Michigan's 2017–2019 study, which demonstrated strong results and paved the way for permanent adoption.

Endorsed by NHTSA, oral fluid testing offers operational advantages such as improved detection windows and greater confidence in impairment assessments. Technical considerations include contamination risks and THC detection dynamics. Pilot testing could be used in supervision and monitoring to familiarize justice stakeholders with the technology and capabilities.

Probation & Risk Assessment

Andrea Henderson, APPA Region 6 Probation Liaison, emphasized the importance of using validated tools like the Impaired Driving Assessment (IDA) to match clients to appropriate programs, address mental health concerns early, and apply strategies such as brief interventions, accountability, and swift sanctions. Region 6 is actively exploring IDA adoption and meeting with the Criminal Justice Assistance Division to integrate it into probation processes, with interest at both the pretrial and probation levels. Training is available for probation and treatment providers, and anyone interested in certification can contact Andrea Henderson at probationreg6@csg.org.



Research Spotlight

Podcast: [Think cannabis and driving don't mix? Think again.](#)

The latest episode of the Driving Change Podcast dives into the surprising truths behind cannabis use and traffic safety. Featuring expert insights from Sarah Hacker of UC San Diego's [TREDs program](#), this conversation unpacks eye-opening research that challenges assumptions, reveals risky behaviors, and highlights the power of targeted education—even in states where cannabis remains illegal.

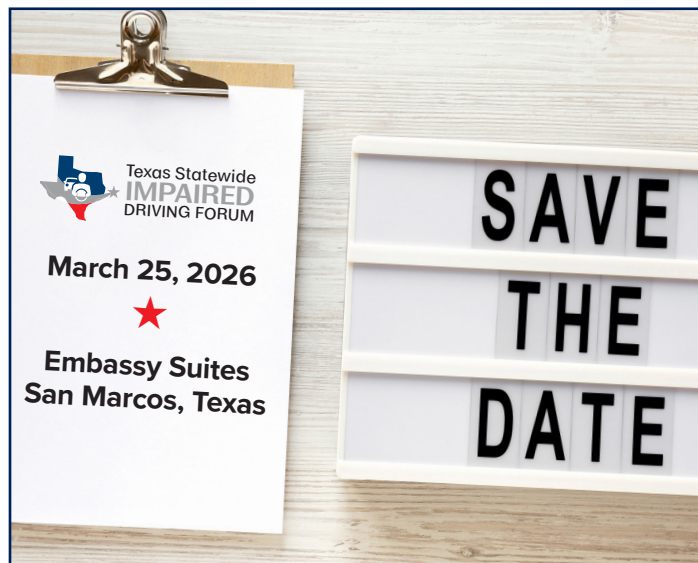
Check out the Street Talk Blog

The Texas Impaired Driving Task Force's Street Talk Blog is your hub for the latest insights and strategies in the fight against impaired driving. From cutting-edge research to interviews with leading experts, the blog highlights best practices that make a real difference on Texas roads.

Explore the [Street Talk Blog](#) today—and be sure to bookmark it for ongoing updates!

Texas Impaired Driving Statewide Assessment

The Texas Impaired Driving Assessment will be held **February 23–27, 2026 at the Marriott Courtyard, in Pflugerville**. Facilitated by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), this assessment offers an in-depth review of Texas' impaired driving program. A panel of subject-matter experts will examine program components, recognize strengths and accomplishments, and provide recommendations for improvement.





DECEMBER

- [DITEP: Region 5 Free 16-Hour Course](#)
December 16–17, 2025 | Beaumont

JANUARY

- [Transportation Research Board Annual Meeting](#)
January 11–15, 2026 | Washington DC
- [DITEP: Potter County Free 16-Hour Course](#)
January 20–21, 2026 | Amarillo
- [ODC: Transportation Safety Training for the Workplace](#)
January 21, 2026 | Webinar

FEBRUARY

- [DITEP: San Antonio Free 16-Hour Course](#)
February 12–13, 2026 | San Antonio
- [ODC: Keeping Employees Safe – Reasonable Suspicion Training & DOT Clearinghouse Insights](#)
February 12, 2026 | Webinar
- [TRCC: Quarterly Meeting](#)
February 25, 2026 | Virtual

MARCH

- [TDCAA: Rolling Stoned: Investigating & Prosecuting the Drugged Driver](#)
March 11, 2026 | Monahans
- [TDCAA: Rolling Stoned: Investigating & Prosecuting the Drugged Driver](#)
March 25, 2026 | Richmond

APRIL

- [TDCAA: Worst Case Scenario: Impaired Driving Cases from Crash to Courtroom](#)
April 1, 2026 | Abilene
- [DITEP: Kilgore Free 16-Hour Course](#)
April 1–2, 2026 | Kilgore
- [International Association for Chemical Testing, Annual Conference](#)
Cincinnati, OH | April 12–27, 2026
- [2026 Lifesavers Conference on Road Safety](#)
April 19–21, 2026 | Baltimore, MD

*See the full list of FREE Impaired Driving Training & Detection Courses at [Texas DRE](#) and [Texas SFST](#).



NEXT MEETING:
February 5, 2026

Courtyard by Marriott
– Pflugerville
16100 Impact Way
Pflugerville, TX 78660



TxDOT Update

David Palmer, Director of Behavioral Traffic Safety at TxDOT, shared that the STEP and General RFPs would be released on November 14 (link [here](#)), with updated processes designed to improve communication and collaboration.

For assistance, direct questions to your Program Manager or to egrantshelp@txdot.gov. Planning for the 2027 Impaired Driving Forum is underway, and members are encouraged to provide feedback.