

The Washington Roadside Survey of Driver Impairment:

During the early summer of 2014, the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation (PIRE), a prominent national, non-profit research organization, will conduct a roadside survey in six Washington counties to determine how many people are driving with drugs or alcohol (or the combination of drugs and alcohol) in their system. The PIRE research will look at some 75 different legal, illegal and over-the-counter drugs that potentially impair driving.

Because Washington is one of only two states that have legalized recreational marijuana, the PIRE roadside survey is more important than ever as it provides a snapshot of driver drug and alcohol use before the marijuana stores open in the summer of 2014. PIRE also plans to study the processes involved with implementing recreational marijuana regulations.

The PIRE Research Project in Washington:

During the month of June, 2014, PIRE researchers will collect data in the following six counties: King, Kitsap, Snohomish, Whatcom, Yakima and Spokane. Within those counties, five data collection locations will be identified. PIRE plans to survey 150 motorists in each county and a total of 900 for the state. The process will be repeated six months later. The total budget for the project is \$1.25 million.

PIRE researchers position themselves at a busy intersection with signage that says a voluntary survey is taking place. Once people agree to do the survey, they are guided by research crew members into a coned off area in a nearby parking lot. For drivers, participation is completely voluntary and anonymous. Drivers are offered up to \$60 to participate in all aspects of the survey and participation takes about 20 minutes. PIRE researchers have no trouble recruiting survey participants. However, they do not take people who show up and volunteer to be surveyed, because PIRE wants a randomized selection of survey participants.

PIRE contracts with local law enforcement to provide security for the survey crewmembers and to assist with site selection. PIRE can identify geographical areas where sampling should take place, but law enforcement know their local areas well and they advise PIRE on which parking lots and busy streets provide the best locations from a logistical standpoint for data collection.

Impaired Driver Protocol:

Local law enforcement, working on contract for PIRE, also help with impaired drivers who drive into the survey operations, which does happen, especially at night. PIRE has a strict protocol for dealing with impaired drivers. Impaired drivers are offered choices: a hotel room, a taxi ride home, a tow truck to haul their vehicle home – all much better choices than the danger of driving impaired or a DUI. If the Research Manager is not able to convince an impaired driver to select one of the choices, the law enforcement officer steps in and goes over the choices again. There have been over 30,000 drivers interviewed since 1996 by PIRE and not one has been issued a DUI.

The PIRE research will be preceded with a public information campaign by WTSC to ensure that motorists know the survey is voluntary and anonymous.

The Impaired Driving Problem:

Though progress has been made over the years, impaired driving is still the number one cause of fatal collisions in Washington, resulting in the deaths of about 200 people each year. Gains in the battle against alcohol impaired driving could be easily undermined with increases in drug impaired driving. A statistically valid research study of driver drug and alcohol use will provide valuable information for policy makers who determine how limited government funds should be invested.

The National Roadside Survey has been conducted about once every ten years since the 1970's. The latest national data collection effort took place in 2013. A state level data collection effort took place in 2012 in California.

Here's a look at the drivers who tested positive for alcohol over the years doing these surveys:

National Roadside Survey:	1973	1986	1996	2007
No alcohol	63.9%	74.1%	83.1%	87.6%
Over .05 BAC	13.6%	8.4%	7.7%	4.5%
Over .08 BAC	7.5%	5.4%	4.3%	2.2%
Total tested positive for alcohol	35.9%	26.0%	16.9%	12.4%

In 2007, PIRE added a component to this survey – collecting saliva samples and blood samples and testing for a range of drugs. Here's what they found:

	Daytime	Nighttime		The most commonly detected drugs:	
No drugs	89%	85.6%		Marijuana	8.6%
Drugs – legal, illegal and over-the-counter	11%	16.3%		Cocaine	3.9%
				Methamphetamine	1.3%

A video that shows what the research work will look like is available at this web address:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1-H2_b8ht_U&feature=youtu.be

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Additional information about the PIRE Roadside Survey work is available on the WTSC website www.wtsc.wa.gov and on PIRE's website www.pire.org.