

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Roadside Survey of Driver Drug and Alcohol Use will Take Place in Seattle This Weekend

Olympia -- Researchers from the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation will be interviewing motorists and gathering data in six Washington counties in June, 2015, as part of a research project aimed at measuring driver drug and alcohol use patterns.

"Impaired drivers kill more than 200 people each year in Washington State. This research will help us better understand the extent of the problem," said Washington Traffic Safety Commission Director Darrin Grondel.

The project is being funded by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and organized in collaboration with the Commission.

Data collectors will work in Spokane, Yakima, King, Snohomish, Whatcom and Kitsap counties and at five separate locations within each of those counties. For drivers, participation in this research is voluntary and anonymous. Last June they interviewed a total of 926 drivers.

"We are grateful to the media for helping us get the word out about this project because we want motorists to know that the survey is entirely voluntary and anonymous. Researchers will not block traffic," Grondel said.

Motorists who volunteer for the survey will be asked questions about their drug and alcohol use patterns and they will be asked to provide breath, blood and saliva samples. If they complete the entire survey, which takes about 20 minutes, they will receive a stipend of \$60. Motorists can drop out of the survey at any time along the way.

Researchers will approach cars when they are stopped at intersections (traffic lights or stop signs) and ask for volunteers. Motorists who are interested in participating are guided to a nearby parking lot where the survey takes place.

Preliminary results from the June, 2014, survey found that most drivers (88% or 768 of the 877 respondents who answered the question) believe that marijuana impairs a person's ability to drive. However, of the people who said they used marijuana within

the last year, 44% said they drove within two hours of using marijuana, or while they were impaired.

Drivers who said they used marijuana and drove within the last year were also asked if they thought marijuana degraded their driving ability, eighty-seven percent said no, 25% felt that driving while high made them a better driver, and only 3% said marijuana degrades their driving ability.

Research shows that driving while high doubles a driver's chance of being in a fatal collision.

"It's extremely troubling to me that so many marijuana users think that driving high is not a problem. It's a serious problem," Grondel said.

From 2011 through 2014 close to 850 people died in Washington as a result of impaired driving. It's the number one cause of fatal collisions.

Of the 888 respondents who answered the question, 69% said they have used marijuana sometime in their life.

The only encouraging news from the survey for traffic safety officials is that a large percentage of the respondents (89%) believe that if you drive high, you will get a DUI.

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Impaired Driving Data:

	All Traffic Deaths	Alcohol BAC over .08	DUI alcohol &/or DUI drugs combined	IDI* percentage of all deaths
2014	465		225	48%
2013	436	106	182	42%
2012	438	126	202	46%
2011	454	135	199	44%
2010	460	152	240	52%
2009	492	189	265	54%
	Serious injuries	Drug &/or alcohol involved	% of all serious injuries	
2013	1921*p	411*p	21%	
2012	2200	501	23%	
2011	2136	479	22%	
2010	2482	470	19%	
2009	2646	570	21%	

IDI means impaired driver involved.