



WASHINGTON FARS



WASHINGTON
Traffic Safety
COMMISSION

October 2013

Quarter 3, Issue 3

So **THC** is Legal; Now What?

As Washington has joined Colorado in decriminalizing marijuana, Washington's traffic safety community is holding its collective breath, waiting to see what the effect of marijuana legalization will be on the safety of our roadways.

At least three other states are considering taking the same step, and about two dozen are considering bills ranging from legalizing medical marijuana to decriminalizing possession of small amounts of this substance.

Will drivers drink less, toked more? Will BAC levels go down and THC levels increase, or will all usage increase? What about the use of other substances suspected to be used with or instead of marijuana?

If only we could go back, say, five years, and track THC/marijuana levels in all drivers, deceased or surviving, in fatal crashes. Or—dreaming big—track *all* substances in these drivers, whether they did or did not use marijuana? We could see if more or fewer drivers are using marijuana, or if usage is unchanged but THC levels are increasing.

We could even see correlations between marijuana use and other drugs, including alcohol.

This data would help us begin to understand the effects of this new law. Toxicology data, as all fatal crash data, is only available because our diligent investigators provide it.

The Research and Data Division has launched a project that will document the levels of all substances identified by the State Toxicology Lab in drivers of fatal crashes. Beginning with 2008 data, we are creating a new data base that captures every substance, its level, and its unit of measurement, found in fatal crash drivers.

Just knowing the data from the past five years, of course, will only give us a hint of the big picture. From now forward, FARS analysts will be documenting all driver and victim toxicology results.

We expect to have a preliminary report after the first of the year.

Stay tuned!



Received New Info or Discovered an Error? Supplement It!

By Staci Hoff, Ph.D.

Information from the collision report is used in every facet of Washington's transportation system, contributing to all four 'E's of Traffic Safety: Enforcement, Engineering, Education, and EMS/Trauma. We all know data will never be perfect, that there are always opportunities for improvement. Accurate information is vital to enforcement and engineering field operations, and provides valuable direction for resource allocation, safety interventions, and legislative policy.

These efforts are only as good as the data that drives them. We rely on our crash investigators to

supply correct and complete information. **So if you have discovered an error in your report, or received pertinent information after the report was filed, such as toxicology results, Supplement it!** The Supplemental form is used when there are more than two units or a commercial motor carrier is involved. The supplement is *also* used to correct or add to previously submitted information. Your diligence in ensuring we receive accurate and complete information is the foundation of all our efforts, and we appreciate and admire the work you do everyday to ensure Washington has the safest roadways in the Nation!

FATAL CRASH REPORTING

2013 QTR 3 HALL OF FAME

TOP REPORTING POLICE DEPARTMENTS:

AUBURN
EVERETT
MILL CREEK
SEATTLE

TOP REPORTING SHERIFF'S OFFICES:

BENTON
CHELAN
CLARK
OKANOGAN
PIERCE
SNOHOMISH
SPOKANE

*The agencies listed
above submitted all
their fatal crash
reports within 4 days
per
RCW 46.52.030*

THANK YOU!!

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*Fatality Analysis Reporting System

Getting Drunks off our Roads:



Thank You to all investigators who work so hard to protect Washington's residents and visitors by removing impaired drivers from our roadways.

When you **note** PBT results on fatal crash reports or suggest a BAC screen to unimpaired drivers in fatal crashes, the lab results contribute valuable data (0.00% is a useful lab result!) that results in Washington receiving federal DUI enforcement funds.

FEEDBACK: This newsletter is a work-in-progress and intended to open discussion between crash data crunchers and law enforcement "boots on the ground." Officers, we need your feedback! What would you like to be addressed in this newsletter? Guest contributors are very welcome! Contact Mimi Nickerson (mnickerson@wtsc.wa.gov) or (360) 725-9892.

Are Contributing Circumstances on the PCTR really that Important?

By Terry Ponton

Data people recognize that as law enforcement officers (LEO) working traffic, your time is extremely limited. When you're completing paperwork, you're not out patrolling to deter high-risk behaviors and crashes by your presence.

However, your completed reports are not just filed away, never to be seen again. All the information captured on the PCTR is coded and entered in to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) fatality database known as the Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS).

Researchers take that data to help identify traffic safety problems and suggest solutions for reducing fatal crashes through vehicle enhancement, roadway and environment improvements and driver behavior education.



However, for FARS analysts to capture the information for research, LEOs must enter the information in the boxes found in the side margins of the PCTR, using the specific numeric codes, or explain in the narrative or a combination thereof. We can only relay exactly what you tell us; we can't interpret and then code what we think you mean if it is not stated on the PCTR. Contributing Circumstances,

circumstances which contributed to the collision, are critical to developing programs to change human behaviors/ actions through education first, then enforcement.

You can enter up to 3 codes per unit in Boxes 27 & 28 respectively for first two units or if you use the code for "Other." describe the contributing circumstances in the narrative (using the phrases outlined on Collision Report Overlay Sheet when possible). These contributing circumstances apply to drivers of motor vehicles, pedestrians, and pedal cyclists. Each human life is important; the information that you capture on the PCTR and we enter into the database gives traffic safety planners and researchers critical information on ways to prevent future crashes, especially fatal crashes.