



IMPAIRED DRIVING

Task Force Newsletter



At the October 17, 2024, meeting of the Texas Impaired Driving Task Force, members discussed the following topics:

FORENSIC TESTING

Breath Alcohol Testing



DPS Crime Lab will soon be updating the instrument firmware to remove the date of birth from the test report. This change will allow for posting to the public facing website without redaction.

For more information on upcoming breath alcohol operator classes, please visit the website <https://www.dps.texas.gov/apps/BalLab>.

Drug Toxicology Exceptional Item Update

In the previous legislative session, DPS secured funding to increase the capacity of the crime laboratory and reduce the drug toxicology backlog. The hiring process and construction of new facilities is underway and expected to be completed in August 2025!

DPS reduced the drug toxicology case backlog by 10% in Fiscal Year 2024. This achievement was made possible by closing unnecessary cases, outsourcing, and implementing changes to testing methods.



DPS Records Portal Announcement

DPS Crime Lab is working through the procurement process to select a vendor that will allow for all crime laboratories to make records available for discovery to the courts. DPS has drafted administrative rules that should be out for public comment by the end of the year.



Prosecution: Implications of the US Supreme Court Decision in *Smith v. Arizona*

The US Supreme Court's decision in [Smith v. Arizona](#) has significant implications for the application of the [Sixth Amendment's Confrontation Clause](#). The ruling clarifies that expert witnesses cannot simply relay the findings of non-testifying analysts without those analysts being subject to cross-examination, ensuring that defendants have the opportunity to challenge the evidence presented against them.

Impact on Forensic Evidence: The decision particularly affects how forensic evidence is presented in court, requiring that the analysts who perform the tests be available for cross-examination.

Impact on DWI Cases: Requiring all analysts who play a role in testing to be present to testify is a significant, and nearly impossible burden.



TEXAS
IMPAIRED DRIVING
TASK FORCE

The next meeting:
Thursday, March 6, 2025

Hilton Austin Airport
9515 Hotel Drive
Austin, TX 78719





Research

The Research Subcommittee reviewed the article “Association between non-medical cannabis legalization and alcohol sales: Quasi-experimental evidence from Canada.” The study aimed to explore the impact of non-medical cannabis legalization on alcohol sales, investigating whether non-medical cannabis serves as a substitute or a complement to alcohol use. View the entire article review on the TxIDTF website [here](#).

- **Study Objective:** A quasi-experimental design was used to investigate evidence on the impact of Canada’s legalization of non-medical cannabis on beer and spirits sales.
- **Design:** Interrupted time series (ITS) design and descriptive methodologies described monthly data on beer sales between January 2012 and February 2020 and spirits sales between January 2016 and February 2020. The methods were used to understand changes in beer and spirits sales following Canada’s non-medical cannabis legalization that occurred in October 2018. Investigators examined changes in total sales, nationally and in individual provinces, as well as changes in sales of bottled, canned, and kegged beer.



STUDY TAKEAWAYS:

- **Canada-wide beer sales dropped after the legalization, but there was no change in spirits sales.**
- **Reductions in beer sales were seen in all provinces except the Atlantic province. The four Western provinces experienced a larger decline than the Central provinces.**
- **Legalization was associated with a decline in canned and kegged beer sales, but there were no reductions in sales of bottled beer.**

TxIDTF Subcommittees

Prevention – NHTSA Assessment Recommendation Updates

#1 Promote and support placement of school resource officers (SROs) in schools throughout Texas.

While the decision to place SROs is determined by individual school districts, the subcommittee aims to support these officers by providing essential resources and programming. The subcommittee will also invite SRO leaders to present on the challenges they encounter, their role in preventing impaired driving, and how available resources can enhance efforts to deter alcohol and drug use among students.

#2 Increase collaboration and integrate the prevention efforts and strategies of local traffic safety programs (e.g., Safe Communities Coalitions) with the strategies of local underage drinking and substance abuse prevention coalitions.

To align local traffic safety efforts with underage drinking and substance abuse prevention initiatives, the subcommittee will create an infographic or fact sheet that highlights the shared goals of these coalitions. This effort will ensure that prevention strategies are in sync with NHTSA’s Countermeasures That Work.

Cannabis and Alcohol Sold in Combination

The Senate Committee on State Affairs held a hearing to evaluate Texas laws and regulations concerning THC beverage manufacturing and delivery. Committee members were looking to understand current regulations and safeguards in Texas, as well as recommended legislation to protect Texas consumers. [Watch the Hearing Here](#).

The availability of THC beverages and other hemp-derived consumable products is rapidly expanding beyond traditional settings (e.g., smoke shops and liquor stores) to include movie theaters, salons, and other venues without age restrictions, raising significant concerns about accessibility for minors. Moreover, many of these locations also serve alcohol, increasing the risk of co-use among individuals aged 21 and older.

The TxIDTF is currently working on producing fact sheets that will help to inform the Texas legislature on this important issue.

Legislation

The 89th Legislature’s regular session runs from January 14 to June 2, 2025. The Texas Impaired Driving Task Force’s Legislative Subcommittee will be monitoring impaired-driving legislation. Impaired-driving bill summaries will be posted to the Texas Impaired Driving Task Force’s website [here](#).



FY25 Project: Comprehensive Impaired Driving Tracking System Framework for Texas

Project Overview

The goal of this project is to create the framework for a comprehensive impaired driving tracking system in Texas, encompassing data collection, process integrations, and record management from law enforcement through the courts. This system aims to enhance the timeliness, accuracy, completeness, uniformity, integration, and accessibility of traffic records across the state.

To achieve this, a Model Impaired Driving Records Information Systems (MIDRIS) Framework will be developed to connect databases from Texas' criminal justice agencies. This includes linking arrest data, criminal histories, driving records, current warrants, and court adjudication information. The framework will enable tracking of DWI offenders from arrest through to disposition, including their history of previous offenses, charges, and completion of court-imposed sanctions.

Key Considerations

- ✓ **Use Cases:** Determine how different stakeholder groups may use the DWI Tracking database.
- ✓ **Data Access:** Determine who will have access to the data, considering that some jurisdictions may not want certain information publicly available.
- ✓ **Stakeholder Participation:** Ensure that all relevant stakeholders are engaged in data input.
- ✓ **Agency Sensitivity:** Address the concerns of agencies reporting data, making the process valuable to them, particularly since this may be viewed as an unfunded mandate.

Next Steps

A questionnaire or brief interviews will be conducted with various stakeholder groups to gather insights on what data should be included in the system and what information needs to be readily accessible.

The Texas Impaired Driving Task Force (TxIDTF) and Texas Traffic Records Coordinating Committee (TRCC) will work in conjunction to build the framework for a comprehensive DWI tracking system in Texas.



Texas Statewide
IMPAIRED
DRIVING FORUM

2025 Texas Impaired Driving Forum

The 2025 Texas Impaired Driving Forum will be held on March 5, 2025, at the [Hilton Austin Airport Hotel](#).

The Forum is a 1-day event that is FREE and open to all audiences. The Forum provides the opportunity to foster partnerships with other organizations and stakeholders interested in combatting impaired driving in Texas.

Register [here](#).

More event info [here](#).

Please contact Christine or Emmy if you have any questions.

Updates from the Traffic Records Coordinating Committee (TRCC)

This statewide group of stakeholders uses the TRCC as a forum for the planning, coordination, and implementation of projects to improve Texas' traffic records system. The TRCC uses federal "State Traffic Safety Information System Improvement Grants (405c)" and other funds to promote projects to improve the accessibility, accuracy, completeness, consistency, timeliness, and uniformity of the traffic records systems in Texas. These projects include efforts to improve individual databases as well as to promote linkages between the core traffic records systems through the development of interfaces to improve direct business needs and integration to improve data analysis.

Join the TRCC email list [here](#).



TEXASTRCC



UPCOMING EVENTS!

Newsletter Additions

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.



DECEMBER

- [Texas DRE: Texarkana – ARIDE Course](#)
December 16-17 | Texarkana, TX
- [TxSFST: Denton 8-HR SFST Refresher Course](#)
December 18 | Denton, TX
- [Texas DRE: Tyler – ARIDE Course](#)
December 18-19 | Tyler, TX
- [Texas DRE: Denton – ARIDE Course](#)
December 18-19 | Denton, TX

JANUARY

- [Texas DRE: Angleton – ARIDE Course](#)
January 6-7 | Angleton, TX
- [Texas DRE: Houston – DRE In-Service Course](#)
January 7 | Houston, TX
- [TxSFST: Kaufman 8-HR SFST Refresher Course](#)
January 7 | Kaufman, TX
- [Texas DRE: Houston – ARIDE Course](#)
January 8-9 | Houston, TX
- [TxSFST: Kaufman 8-HR SFST Refresher Course](#)
January 9 | Kaufman, TX
- [Texas DRE: Stephenville – ARIDE Course](#)
January 9-10 | Stephenville, TX
- [Texas DRE: Waxahachie – ARIDE Course](#)
January 13-14 | Waxahachie, TX
- [TxSFST: Galveston 8-HR SFST Refresher Course](#)
January 14 | Galveston, TX
- [NSC: Drug and Alcohol Testing Webinar](#)
January 16 | Virtual
- [Texas DRE: Round Rock – DRE In-Service Course](#)
January 20 | Round Rock, TX
- [Texas DRE: Abilene – ARIDE Course](#)
January 27-28 | Abilene, TX
- [Texas DRE: Sugar Land – ARIDE Course](#)
January 27-28 | Sugar Land, TX

FEBRUARY

- [TxSFST: Edinburg 50-HR SFST Instructor Course](#)
February 3-7 | Edinburg, TX
- [Texas DRE: Texas DPS – ARIDE Course](#)
February 5-6 | Garland, TX
- [TxSFST: Crockett Co 8-HR SFST Refresher Course](#)
February 11 | Ozona, TX
- [TxSFST: Kimble Co 8-HR SFST Refresher Course](#)
February 13 | Junction, TX
- [Texas DRE: Houston – DRE In-Service](#)
February 17 | Houston, TX
- [TxSFST: Bell Co 8-HR Advanced DWI Course](#)
February 18 | Belton, TX
- [Texas DRE: Fredericksburg – ARIDE Course](#)
February 18-19 | Fredericksburg, TX
- [Texas DRE: Texas DPS – ARIDE Course](#)
February 19-20 | Garland, TX
- [NSC: Workplace Impairment Training](#)
February 20 | Virtual
- [Texas DRE: Boerne – ARIDE Course](#)
February 20-21 | Boerne, TX
- [Texas DRE: San Antonio – DRE In-Service Course](#)
February 24 | San Antonio, TX
- [TxSFST: Ennis 8-HR SFST Refresher Course](#)
February 25 | Ennis, TX
- [Texas DRE: San Antonio – ARIDE Course](#)
February 25-26 | San Antonio, TX
- [TxSFST: Ennis 8-HR SFST Refresher Course](#)
February 27 | Ennis, TX

Congratulations on Retirement, Troy!

As we bid farewell to Dr. Troy D. Walden, we take a moment to reflect on his extraordinary contributions to the Texas Impaired Driving Task Force and the field of highway safety. With over 34 years of dedicated service as a law enforcement officer, traffic safety advocate, and impaired driving researcher, Dr. Walden has significantly impacted our community and beyond.

Throughout his career, Dr. Walden has been a tireless advocate for traffic safety. His research on alcohol and drugged driving, along with the behavioral impacts of impairment, has informed policies and practices that save lives. His leadership on the Texas Impaired Driving Task Force exemplifies his commitment to creating safer roadways for all Texans.

Congratulations, Dr. Walden, and thank you for your invaluable service to our community and the countless lives you've impacted. Enjoy every moment of your well-deserved retirement!

