

Commentary

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Drugged Driving Becomes National Priority in United Kingdom; New Education Campaign Sets Precedent for United States

The United Kingdom's Department for Transport (DfT) recently launched a £2.3 million campaign to address drugged driving. Entitled *THINK! Drug Drive*, this campaign reinforces key educational, legal, and policy messages to the public, including:

- it is illegal to operate a motor vehicle while under the influence of drugs;
- drugs significantly impair drivers, putting all other drivers at risk;
- police officers can recognize signs of drug impairment in drivers;
- police officers utilize tools like the Field Impairment Assessment to determine impairment either at roadside or at police stations; and,
- convicted drugged drivers suffer serious consequences including a minimum 12-month driving ban, a criminal record, and a fine of up to £5000.

The United States should follow this impressive lead with a major public educational campaign. The recent release by the U.S. Department of Transportation of the 2007 National Roadside Survey (NRS) data shows a higher rate of drugged driving than drunk driving in the U.S. Similar data on the rates of impaired driving related to illegal drug use were found in the UK helping to ignite this important public service campaign. In fact, Kevin Clinton, the head of road safety at the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA), said, "Drug-driving is just as serious as drink-driving, and is becoming an increasing challenge."

IBH applauds DfT for highlighting this major public safety problem. This initiative has already gained global support. Drugged driving is the best new idea to reduce the demand for illegal drugs and to improve highway safety. An initiative such as the DfT's new drugged driving campaign does not compete with efforts to reduce driving under the influence of alcohol; it builds on those efforts and enhances them. Now is the time for the U.S. to initiate a major campaign to reduce drugged driving, as well as to focus anew on the problems of drunk driving.

Information on the DfT *THINK! Drug Driving* campaign can be found at:

<http://www.dft.gov.uk/think/drugdrive/>.

The RoSPA press release can be found at:

http://www.rospa.com/news/releases/2009/pr707_17_08_09_road.htm.

For more information about drugged driving and about what to do to reduce it, visit:

www.StopDruggedDriving.org and www.ibhinc.org.

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