

# Dep. of Transportation: Receives grant to combat impaired driving

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## **WisDOT receives grant to combat impaired driving**

Wisconsin's efforts to stop impaired driving received a boost in the form of a grant from the Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA) and the Foundation for Advancing Alcohol Responsibility ([responsibility.org](https://responsibility.org)). The \$45,000 grant will fund law enforcement training to identify drug-impaired drivers through the state's Drug Recognition Expert (DRE) program.

"This is a direct investment in the safety of Wisconsin highways," Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) Secretary-designee Craig Thompson said. "Training law enforcement personnel is an important step in keeping our highways and communities safe."

## **Wisconsin's DRE program**

DREs are highly skilled, highly trained experts in detecting the influence of psychoactive drugs on individuals. They are further trained in documenting and

testifying in court to support their evaluation.

With the steady increase in use of prescription pills and other drugs, these experts play an increasing role in investigating impaired driving cases. They also serve as a community resource, helping educate teachers and school administrators, clergy, parents, social workers and other medical staff to recognize the signs of drug abuse.

WisDOT's Bureau of Transportation Safety has operated the Drug Recognition Expert program for almost 30 years, holding spring and fall training sessions annually. Wisconsin's Fall DRE School will be held in Milwaukee starting October 5, 2021.

The goal is to have at least one expert in every county. Currently 50 of the state's 72 counties have at least one DRE. Trained officers, including those from the Wisconsin State Patrol (WSP), are often called upon by communities without a certified DRE to assist in impaired driving cases.

"We want to be a resource for our law enforcement partners, so that together we can identify and apprehend drug-impaired drivers, and conduct evaluations to help secure convictions to keep our highways safe for all users," WSP Superintendent Anthony Burrell said.

The Wisconsin DRE training program consists of approximately 72 hours of intense classroom training, combined with 72

hours of hands-on field certification, and an 8-hour comprehensive final exam. It teaches a [12-step protocol](#) that involves observations, blood pressure, pulse and pupil tests. It ends with blood and urine analysis. The Drug Recognition program looks at the physical symptoms of the person in question in order to identify one of seven broad categories of intoxicant a person of interest is affected by, or if they're possibly suffering from a medical condition that is mimicking drug impairment.

This program is 100% federally funded. Individual law enforcement agencies cover the trainees' time, meals and transportation. In addition to the original training, these experts must recertify every year.