



## High Visibility Enforcement Programs

Law enforcement agencies routinely utilize general deterrence strategies to influence behavior. These strategies are effective because they raise the perceived risk of being detected while engaging in criminal behavior which increases the likelihood of facing negative consequences for actions. In the context of impaired driving, greater law enforcement presence on the roadways, particularly during periods when individuals are most likely to be consuming alcohol (e.g., night-time, weekends), can deter people from drinking and driving because they think there is greater potential that they will be pulled over and arrested for DUI. Research consistently shows that in order to be effective, enforcement activities must be well planned, properly executed, visible, and sustained for substantial periods of time. These DUI enforcement strategies must be complemented by aggressive, timely, and complementary public information campaigns. In other words, it is often not enough to simply have an increased law enforcement presence. To deter impaired driving, it is important to publicize the increased law enforcement presence ahead of time so that people are aware that mobilization campaigns are occurring and therefore, will be more inclined to plan ahead.

High Visibility Enforcement (HVE) campaigns typically utilize stepped up enforcement efforts that may include saturation patrols, No Refusal programs, and/or sobriety checkpoints combined with accompanying public information campaigns. Electronic message boards, road signs, command posts, scene lighting, and Breath Alcohol Testing (BAT) vehicles enhance the highly visible law enforcement presence. For some of these efforts, judges may be on-call to facilitate in obtaining warrants for blood draws expeditiously. While HVE efforts should occur year-round, many largescale efforts are scheduled for strategic times of year when rates of impaired driving increase – e.g., summer vacation, holidays, etc. Annual national mobilizations focusing on impaired driving, speeding, and seatbelt enforcement campaigns all utilize the HVE model.



An added benefit of HVE efforts is that it is an opportunity to increase public awareness about important traffic safety issues. When conducting impaired driving HVE campaigns, law enforcement agencies and other stakeholders should consider focusing on both alcohol and drug-impaired driving. While the public is generally aware that law enforcement officers can identify and arrest drunk drivers, there are pervasive misperceptions about law enforcement's ability to identify individuals under the influence of drugs. As such, there are new opportunities to educate the public and create deterrence for different forms of impaired driving.

### **Research Highlights:**

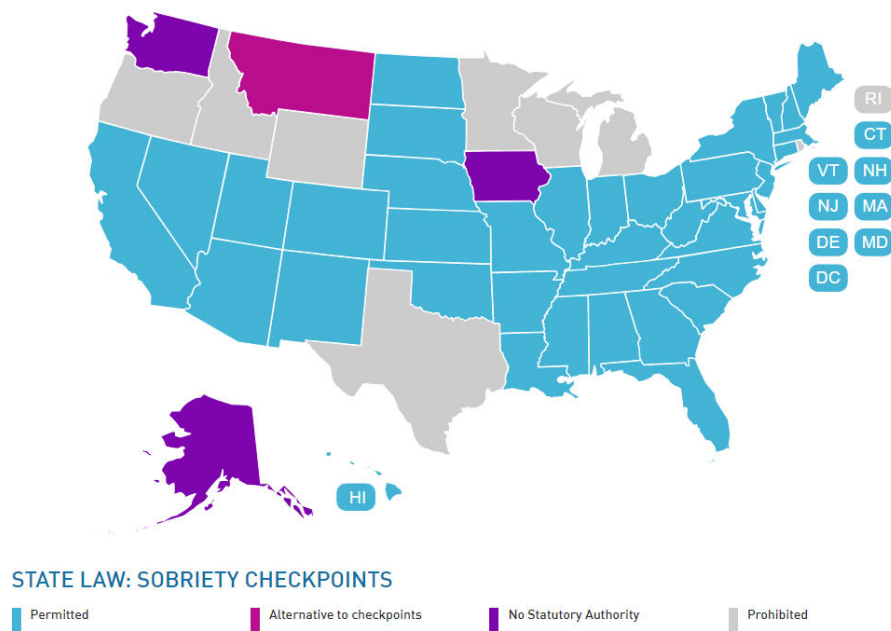
- States with highly visible, highly publicized impaired driving enforcement programs tend to have lower impaired driving rates in fatal crashes (Fell et al., 2013).
- Among repeat offenders, when police presence was certain, there was a decrease in DUI behavior (Wiliszowski et al., 1996).
- After a sustained year-long HVE program in Tennessee (*Checkpoint Tennessee*), there was a 20.4% reduction in alcohol-related crashes (Lacey et al., 1999).

- Checkpoints can also be effective in detecting offenders who continue to drive with a suspended or revoked license (Ross and Gonzales, 1988).
- An intensive checkpoint program can be expected to reduce alcohol-attributable crashes by about 15% (Miller et al., 1998).
- A systematic review found that the median decrease in the number of alcohol-related fatalities in jurisdictions that utilized publicized sobriety checkpoints was 8.9% (Bergen et al., 2014). The review also emphasized the importance of including media campaigns and conducting multiple checkpoints over a lengthy time period (i.e., 1-3 years).
- In states where conducting checkpoints is legal, 58-72% of law enforcement agencies conduct sobriety checkpoints (Eichelberger and McCartt, 2016).
- In a study by Lenk et al. (2016), states that permitted checkpoints had an 18.2% lower rate of alcohol-impaired driving; states that conducted checkpoints at least on a monthly basis had a 40.6% lower rate.
- Saturation patrols are more commonly utilized than checkpoints. A study by Erickson et al. (2015) found that 95.8% of state patrol agencies and 62.7% of local law enforcement agencies used saturation patrols as a means to identify impaired drivers.

### **Prevalence:**

Every state operates some form of HVE and states receive millions of Federal highway safety dollars to fund these campaigns. Ideally, law enforcement agencies should conduct HVE efforts on a consistent basis throughout the year and participate in larger mobilizations at strategic points.

One of the most common forms of HVE is the use of sobriety checkpoints. This countermeasure remains somewhat controversial as the use of checkpoints is not permitted in every state. Currently, 37 states and DC<sup>1</sup> permit the use of checkpoints. Access the Responsibility.org [State Laws Map](#) to learn more about these enforcement practices.



<sup>1</sup> There are several reasons why states do not permit sobriety checkpoints – there may be no statutory authority, or the checkpoints may be deemed to violate a state’s constitution. States that do not permit checkpoints include AK, IDA, IA, MI, MN, MT (although they permit safety “spot-checks”), OR, RI, TX, WA, WI, and WY. MOi technically permits checkpoints but no funding is given for their administration.

## **Responsibility.org Position:**

Responsibility.org supports high visibility enforcement efforts to reduce impaired driving. These comprehensive enforcement efforts should be utilized in areas with a high occurrence of impaired driving crashes or fatalities and need to be coupled with media campaigns to create general deterrence.

## **References:**

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