

SafeDriver Monthly Newsletter

September 2022



Cannabis and Driving

The following is a news release from the Governors Highway Safety Association

“WASHINGTON, D.C. – As cannabis use becomes more prevalent in the United States, the Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA), Responsibility.org and the National Alliance to Stop Impaired Driving (NASID) today released a [new report](#) that provides guidance on how State Highway Safety Offices (SHSOs) can better communicate with cannabis consumers about safe driving and offers recommendations about the types of messages that do and don't work.

The report, [Cannabis Consumers and Safe Driving: Responsible Use Messaging](#), comes as SHSOs face a rapidly changing cannabis landscape that includes the legality, prevalence and social norms about its use. In 2011, no state had legalized recreational cannabis. Just 10 years later, 18 states have done so, and more states will have legalization on the ballot this November. Cannabis use has increased alongside the



spread of state legalization. In 2019, 18% of people aged 12 and older in the U.S. reported using cannabis in the past year, up from 11% in 2002. Attitudes about cannabis use are changing, too. The drug is celebrated in places where it has traditionally been shunned. This year, two candidates for U.S. Senate have aired ads featuring them smoking cannabis.

Even as more people become familiar with cannabis and calls for national legalization grow, there remains a significant disconnect between people's views on its use and safe driving, emphasizing the need for effective public outreach and education. An AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety [survey](#) found that 95% of people say driving while over the legal blood alcohol concentration (BAC) limit is very or extremely dangerous, but only 69% believe it is dangerous to drive within an hour of consuming cannabis. Some people even think that cannabis use improves their driving. But research confirms that cannabis directly affects the parts of the brain responsible for attention, decision-making, coordination, and reaction time, which are all critical for safe driving.

Compounding the challenges of addressing cannabis- and multiple substance-impaired driving, early signs point to cannabis playing an increasing role in traffic fatalities during the COVID-19 pandemic. [Data](#) from trauma centers indicated that 33% of drivers involved in fatal crashes had tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), the main psychoactive compound in cannabis, in their system – a significant increase from 21% before the pandemic. Cannabis was slightly more prevalent than alcohol in fatal crash-involved drivers (33% for cannabis vs. 29% for alcohol) during the pandemic. Impairment from multiple substances also rose the past few years, with 25% of drivers in fatal crashes testing positive for more than one impairing substance, compared to 18% before the pandemic.

“As legal cannabis use becomes more widespread in the U.S., motorists need to know the dangers of driving under the influence,” said GHSA Executive Director Jonathan Adkins. “But that message won’t be heard if it’s outdated, irrelevant or insulting to cannabis consumers. This new report offers a playbook to help states develop messaging that resonates with cannabis users and prompts them to refrain from driving for their own safety and the safety of everyone else on the road.”

The report highlights lessons learned from outreach efforts in Colorado and Washington, the first states to legalize cannabis, as well as more recent efforts in Connecticut and Wyoming. It also discusses promising practices that all SHSOs should consider utilizing to create the most effective messages and offers the following recommendations:

- **Encourage dedicated funding for traffic safety programs derived from a portion of cannabis sales tax revenue** so that states and their partners can deliver timely and relevant information to the public.
- **Form partnerships with the cannabis industry**, which can help states gain insights on consumer motivations and behaviors, develop and deliver impactful messaging, and legitimize safety efforts.
- **Enlist trusted advisors to serve as messengers.** Have people and institutions that cannabis users trust – rather than government representatives – convey factual safe driving messages. Diverse and non-traditional messengers can improve message reception with cannabis consumers.
- **Use language that resonates with cannabis consumers**, so they hear the safe driving message instead of tuning it out because it has outdated terminology. Avoid using unflattering or alienating stereotypes of cannabis consumers.

“Impaired driving, whether it involves alcohol, cannabis, other drugs or a combination of substances, is wreaking havoc on our nation’s roads, and we all must respond quickly and effectively,” said Darrin Grondel, Ed.D., Vice President of Government Relations and Traffic Safety for Responsibility.org and Director of NASID. “The messages, strategies, data, and approaches identified in this new report will make that response more effective in positively changing cannabis consumer behavior to the benefit of every American on our nation’s roadways.”

The report’s findings and recommendations will be discussed during a session at the [2022 NASID Conference](#), July 27-29 in Washington, DC, featuring Karen Sprattler of the Sprattler Group, who researched and wrote the report. NASID was established by Responsibility.org to eliminate impaired driving in all its forms, especially multiple substance impaired driving.

The [NASID website](#) features an interactive, online database updated in real-time that lets users easily see cannabis and DUI laws across the U.S.”



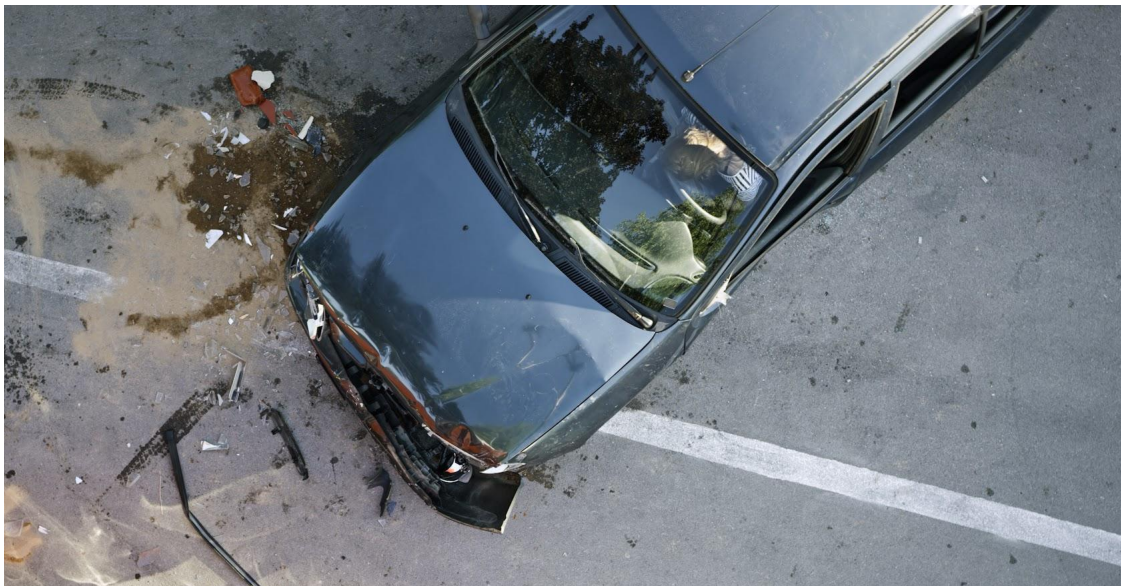
Trains

It seems that more and more people are ignoring the flashing lights and crossing arms at railroad crossings in Florida and they're paying the price.

A lot of people don't realize just how fast trains are traveling. Large vehicles like trucks, buses and trains always seem to be traveling much slower than they actually are. When the lights start flashing and the gates go down, the train will usually appear at the crossing within 15 seconds. That doesn't give a driver who is trying to snake around the crossing arms much time.

A train can't stop quickly! With all that weight traveling at normal speeds, a train can take up to a mile to come to a complete stop. When a railroad engineer sees a vehicle in the crossing, all he can do is blow his horn and brace for the blow. He'll start filling out his accident report a mile down the track.

In a race with a train, the train will always win, obliterating the motor vehicle while receiving little damage to the train!



When approaching a railroad crossing don't try to cross the tracks until you have enough clear space for your vehicle on the other side. You don't want to be trapped by traffic ahead on the crossing if a train should appear. If you are trapped or stalled on the crossing, get out of the vehicle and run away from the tracks in the direction from which the train is approaching. That way, you will void the flying debris from the crash. If you are stuck on the tracks and no train is near, call 911 so that they can alert the railroad to prevent a crash.

