

## Impaired Driving Program - Problem Identification FY24 HSP

### Alcohol/Drug Problem ID

Despite being below the national average regarding alcohol and drug-related fatalities, impaired driving remains a problem in Utah. To combat this issue, Utah implemented the country's first .05 BAC law on December 30, 2018. This law aims to encourage people to be more mindful of their actions and make safer decisions, including separating the activity of drinking and driving, with the ultimate goal of reducing fatalities caused by impaired driving on Utah's roads.

*It should be noted that when referring to data in this section, **alcohol-related fatal crashes and fatalities** include only those incidents where at least one of the drivers tested positive for alcohol and had a BAC of > .05; **alcohol-related crashes** include incidents where a positive alcohol test has been confirmed for any level of alcohol; **drug-related crashes and fatalities** include the number of crashes resulting from one or more drivers who had a positive drug test. Drug presence does not necessarily imply impairment. For many drug types, drug presence can be detected long after any impairment that might affect driving has passed.*

In Utah, alcohol-related fatal crashes accounted for 15% of fatalities in motor vehicle crashes during the 2017-2021 time period, despite only making up 1.5% of total traffic crashes. Data from the same time period revealed that alcohol-related driver crashes are 11.9 times more likely to be deadly than other crashes. During 2021, 297 fatal crashes occurred, resulting in 332 total fatalities. Of these 297 crashes, 55 involved an alcohol-related driver, leading to 61 fatalities.

On average, 41 people die each year in Utah due to alcohol-related crashes. In the 2017-2021 time period, there were 869 possible injury crashes, 744 injury crashes, and 2,735 property damage-only crashes. During the same time period, 79% of deaths in alcohol-related crashes were drivers, 17% were passengers, and 4% were non-motorists.

Drug-impaired driving remains a significant issue in Utah and throughout the United States. On average, 100 individuals die in Utah each year in crashes where the driver tested positive for drugs. Between 2017-2021, drug-related fatal crashes accounted for 36% of traffic fatalities in the state. During that same time period, drug-related crashes made up .3% of total traffic crashes in Utah. Part of the challenge in addressing drug-impaired driving is there are over 430 different types of drugs or metabolites that can cause impairment, making it difficult to determine levels of impairment in the same way the .05 BAC is used for alcohol. Other factors include a lack of training in drug recognition, a high number of unknown BAC results, and the legalization of medical marijuana in Utah and other levels of legalization in surrounding states. The most common substances found in drug-positive driver fatalities in Utah in 2021 were marijuana/THC, stimulants, depressants, and opioids.

Crash data from 2017-2021 shows that alcohol and drug-impaired drivers in Utah have similar demographics, with both groups primarily consisting of males aged 21-39. Among alcohol-related

crashes in Utah during this time period, the highest age group was 25-29 years old, followed closely by 21-24 years old. 66% of drivers involved in these crashes were male. For drug-related crashes, the highest age group was 25-29 years old, with the 30-34 age group coming in second. Utah's population has seen substantial growth in recent years. From 2017 to 2021, the population has increased from approximately 3,155,000 to 3,380,800, with 14.8% of the population being of Hispanic origin. This growth identifies the need to increase outreach for impaired driving messaging in Hispanic communities.

Impaired driving crashes are a significant issue throughout Utah but are most common along the Wasatch Front, an area that includes Ogden to Provo and has the highest concentration of the state's population. Crash data from 2017-2021 shows that Salt Lake, Utah, Davis, and Weber Counties have the highest rates of alcohol-related crashes, while Utah, Salt Lake, Washington, and Weber Counties have the highest rates of drug-related crashes. The highest rates of alcohol and drug-related fatal crashes can be found in Salt Lake and Utah Counties.

Alcohol-related crashes in Utah tend to occur throughout the year, with the highest number occurring from June to December. These crashes are most likely to happen Friday through Sunday between 6:00 p.m. and 1:00 a.m. Drug-impaired crashes are most common from July to September, typically occurring between 3:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. Thursday through Sunday.

Even with the state's growing population, the number of DUI arrests in Utah over the past five years (2018-2022) has remained relatively consistent, with some fluctuations, including a drop in 2019, followed by increases in 2020 and 2021, and a slight decrease in 2022. According to the Utah Commission on Criminal and Juvenile Justice, there were 10,412 DUI arrests in 2022, a slight decrease from the previous year's 10,619 arrests.

In 2022, out of the 10,412 DUI arrests, almost fifty percent (50%) did not have a BAC reported (arrestees may have submitted to a blood test, but the Driver License Division never received the results, or the arrest was DUI/Drug-related), and 13% refused to test. Of those with a BAC reported, 41% exceeded .15. In addition, 2022 data shows 8% of BAC's were recorded within the range of .05-.07, representing a slight decrease from the previous year, where 9% of BAC's fell within that range. The average BAC for arrestees was .14, with the highest being .46, over 8 times the per se limit. Most DUI arrests in Utah involve male suspects, with 74% of arrestees being male, 24% being female, and 2% being unspecified. In 2022, 71% of arrestees were first-time offenders, while 19% had one prior arrest and 10% had two or more prior arrests for DUI. The majority of DUI arrests occurred along the Wasatch Front, with Salt Lake, Davis, Utah, and Weber Counties accounting for 66% of the total. While counties outside the Wasatch Front only accounted for 34% of the total.

Gathering accurate data on drug-related arrests and crashes can be challenging. To combat this problem, the Highway Safety Office began funding a position within the Public Health Laboratory in 2020, including no-stop-limit testing where DUI arrest cases are tested for drugs, even if the alcohol testing threshold has been met. Data from FY21 shows that 66% of DUI cases involved drugs or a combination of drugs and alcohol, and 34% involved alcohol only. FY22 data shows 65% of arrest cases involved drugs or a combination of drugs and alcohol, and 35% involved alcohol only. The top substances found

in DUI arrest cases in FY21 and FY22 were alcohol, THC/marijuana, stimulants, opioids, and sedatives. Toxicology lab data suggest a high prevalence of poly-use (combination of drugs and alcohol) in DUI arrest cases in Utah, with THC being the most common drug combined with alcohol. While this data is significant in identifying impaired driving issues within the state, additional years of research and data are necessary before making any conclusions.

According to MADD, the average drunk driver has driven impaired over 80 times before being arrested. Despite campaign messages such as "Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over" and "If You Feel Different, You Drive Different," people continue to drive while impaired by alcohol or drugs. Some individuals may choose to drive while impaired due to a false sense of confidence in their driving abilities, proximity to their destination, or the belief in not getting caught. Other factors contributing to impaired driving include the inability to accurately gauge one's BAC level or the impact medication, and other illegal substances can have on driving ability.

Research has shown that while very few people intentionally set out to drive while impaired, most are aware of the potential consequences of being caught by law enforcement. This behavior often results from a series of poor decisions, both before and after alcohol or drug consumption. It is critical that drivers make the decision not to drive while impaired, plan ahead for a sober ride, and avoid getting behind the wheel while under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Utah is committed to educating the public about the dangers and consequences of impaired driving and will continue to encourage drivers to make the right decision not to drive while under the influence.

### **Drowsy Driving Program**

Drowsy driving is the act of driving or operating a motor vehicle while tired and feeling fatigued or sleepy. Many factors can contribute to driver fatigue such as stress, medication, sleep disorders, shift work and an interrupted night's sleep. Driving while tired decreases awareness, slows reaction time and impairs judgment, putting the driver and others around them in danger. Between 2017-2021 fatal drowsy driver-related crashes account for 3.53% of all Utah fatal crashes. Although this percentage is low, it may not show the true size of the problem. Identifying drowsiness or fatigue, and determining its role in the crash, can be challenging for law enforcement. According to the CDC when you are awake for more than 18 hours, the effect on your body is the same as if you had a BAC of 0.05 percent. After 24 hours awake, it's like having a BAC of 0.10 percent, which is double the legal limit in Utah. It has also been shown that those who sleep six hours or less are three times more likely to crash.

In looking at crash data between 2017-2021 total fatalities in Utah were on the decline between the years of 2017-2019. In 2017 there were 273 deaths; 2018 had 260 and 2019 had 248. Unfortunately, fatalities have increased significantly in 2020-2021 with 276 deaths in 2020 and 332 deaths in 2021. Drowsy driving fatalities between 2017-2021 were on the decline until 2018 when Utah saw a high of 16 drowsy driving fatalities. That number has since decreased to 7 fatalities in 2019 and 4 in 2020. Unfortunately, drowsy driving fatalities increased in 2021 with a reported 14 fatalities.

Utah crash data for a five-year period (2017-2021) for drowsy driver-related crashes and fatal crashes showed that:

- Fatal crashes were highest among drivers aged 13-20 years (26% of drowsy drivers)
- Fatal crashes were more common among males (80% of drowsy drivers)
- Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday had the highest number of total drowsy driving crashes.
- May through August were highest for total drowsy driving crashes, while September and December had the most deaths involving a drowsy driver.
- Fatal crashes were highest during the hours of 8:00 am and 3pm, while 5:00-8:59 a.m. and 3:00-4:59 p.m. had the highest number of total crashes.
- Fatal crashes were highest in Millard, Salt Lake, Tooele, and Utah Counties while total crashes were highest in Salt Lake, Utah, Davis and Weber Counties.
- Over 56% of drowsy driver crashes were a result of the driver failing to keep in their proper lane.