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## I HAVE A DRUG-IMPAIRED DRIVER, NOW WHAT DO I DO?

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A police officer observes a vehicle all over the road and initiates a traffic stop. During that contact, the driver exhibits every indicator of being intoxicated except the odor of ingested alcohol. The driver fails all the Standardized Field Sobriety Tests, but surprisingly blows a zero on a breath test. You notice pill bottles in the car and now suspect the person might have consumed some sort of drugs. Now what do you do?

The above hypothetical situation is an all-too-common reality across the state of Iowa and across the country. Unfortunately, there continues to be a marked increase in drug-impaired driving making it essential for some police officers to have specialized training. This specially trained police officer is called a Drug Recognition Expert (DRE).

A DRE is a police officer trained to recognize impairment in drivers under the influence of drugs other than, or in addition to, alcohol. In the early 1970s, two officers from the Los Angeles Police Department who continually observed individuals operating vehicles while drug impaired began developing a program to get them off the streets. In conjunction with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), the officers worked with medical professionals to develop the DRE Program. It was determined that officers, with the proper training, could very accurately determine if a person was impaired and they could determine the category of drugs that was causing the impairment. This program has been refined over the years and is now one of the most revered law enforcement specialties by police officers, prosecutors, defense attorneys and judges.

The training to become a DRE consists of three phases that, collectively, prepare police officers to serve as DREs. After nine days of intensive classroom training, officers move into a field certification phase where they evaluate actual drug-impaired people. They have to accurately determine what category of drug(s) is causing the person's impairment, which is then confirmed by a toxicology test. Throughout the school, there is a series of quizzes and tests, and after all the training is completed, there is a comprehensive final knowledge examination.

In Iowa, the DRE Program started in the early 1990s and has continually grown in popularity. Today, Iowa has approximately 120 DREs and those DREs are responsible for several hundred drug-impaired people being taken off Iowa's roadways each year. In 2013, Iowa was ranked third in the country for the total DRE evaluations completed per DRE officer. This statistic speaks volumes toward the officers' commitment toward highway safety.

In addition to all the work conducting evaluations, many of the DREs assist in training non-DRE police officers in recognizing the signs and symptoms of drug-impaired drivers. This program, called the Advanced Roadside Impaired Driving Enforcement (ARIDE), teaches these officers when it's appropriate to contact a DRE to conduct an evaluation. Since the inception of ARIDE in Iowa, there has been a marked increase in drug-impaired drivers being located and turned over to DREs.

Due to the hard work of DREs and prosecutors in Iowa, nationally and internationally, thousands of impaired drivers are taken off the roadways each year. For more information about the DRE Program, please visit the DRE website at <http://www.decp.org/experts/>.

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