

## IMPAIRED DRIVING

**PROGRAM GOALS:** To reduce alcohol/drug related motor vehicle crashes, injuries and fatalities through the systematic delivery of effective program countermeasures. The overall goal is to reduce alcohol impaired driving fatalities by 5% from 290 (2010-2012 average) to 276 (2013-2015 average) in 2015.



### Effectiveness of Programs

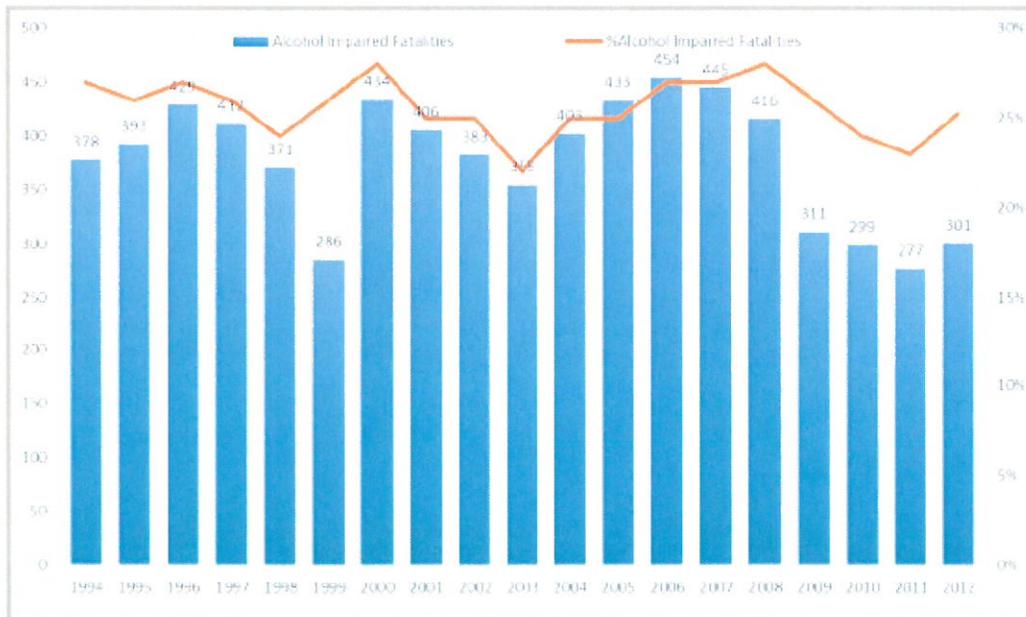
The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has proven the effectiveness of the following programs that Georgia participates in. Citations reference Countermeasures That Work: Seventh Edition, 2013. (CTW) Data throughout this section showing the decrease in traffic fatalities proves the effectiveness of these programs.

- DUI Courts (Countermeasures That Work (CTW), Chapter 1: page 25)
- Young Adult Program, Students Against Destructive Decisions (CTW, Chapter 1: pages 50, 59)
- Prosecuting Attorney's Council: Traffic Safety Resource Prosecutors (CTW, Chapter 1: page 12)
- High Visibility Enforcement: H.E.A.T. (CTW, Chapter 1: pages 19-22,24)

### Problem Identification and Program Justification

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) reports that in 2012, 40,716 people were killed in motor vehicle traffic crashes in the United States, of which 9,878 (31%) were alcohol-related. Every two minutes in America, someone is injured in an alcohol-related crash. Nationally, these crashes result in more than \$45 billion in economic costs on an annual basis.

**Georgia Alcohol-Impaired Driving Fatalities**



As indicated in the graph above, alcohol was associated with 301 highway fatalities in Georgia during 2012. This equates to twenty-five percent (25%) of Georgia's overall fatalities. Data shows from 2011 to 2012, Georgia experienced a decrease in overall crash fatalities of 31 and an increase of 24 more alcohol-related traffic deaths.

Alcohol-impaired driving death rates are very high in urban areas where alcohol establishments are most prevalent. These areas include: Metropolitan Atlanta, Augusta, Savannah, Macon, and Columbus. College towns such as Athens and Valdosta, though not heavily populated, tend to show trends of impaired driving problems as well. Overwhelmingly, impaired driving crashes tend to take place between the hours of 10:00PM and 4:00AM; these hours are consistent with bar and restaurant closings.

The chance of a crash being fatal is six times higher if exposed to an impaired driver when compared to those not related to alcohol or drugs. These numbers indicate that Georgia should continue to emphasize preventative measures for countering the problems of driving under the influence of alcohol. Even with stricter laws, high visibility law enforcement, and increased public information and education (PI&E) programs, the number of impaired driving crashes, injuries and fatalities remains unacceptable.

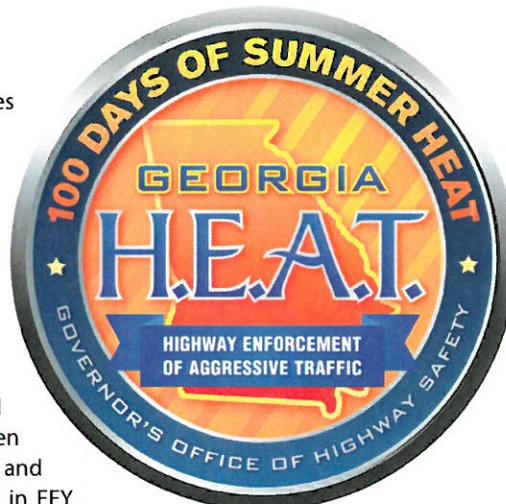
Georgia's impaired driving statistics have been impacted by the drug culture as reflected in an increase in drug related crashes. The number of law enforcement officers properly trained to identify drug impairment has been limited because of manpower shortages and lack of understanding for the need of this training by the law enforcement community. A companion program to Drug Recognition Experts (DRE), Standardized Field Sobriety Testing (SFST), is experiencing some success although the defense bar has vigorously attacked the Standardized Field Sobriety Test (SFST) process, particularly the portion which deals with Horizontal Gaze Nystagmus (HGN). The primary problem is that many non-traffic enforcement officers are not properly trained in this procedure and their ability to detect, evaluate and help through prosecution efforts is limited.

Georgia's Administrative License Suspension (ALS) law continues to be misused by the defense bar. In assessing the effectiveness of Georgia's ALS procedures for impaired drivers, the initial analysis of ALS hearings and data revealed that a large percentage of ALS hearings were lost by the state because of the officer's failure to attend hearings. Training proves to be an effective tool to combat ALS issues and Georgia will increase its efforts to train law enforcement and ALS judges.

### **Impaired Driving Enforcement – Highway Enforcement of Aggressive Traffic (H.E.A.T.)**

Aggressive driving has been determined to be one of the leading causes of death and serious injury crashes on the roadways of Georgia. Driving under the influence of alcohol and speed are among the worst behaviors identified with aggressive drivers.

Since 2001, the Georgia Governor's Office of Highway Safety has maintained a multi-jurisdictional task force to address aggressive and impaired driving in Georgia. Originally, three officers from six counties, the City of College Park, and the City of Atlanta came together to form a team of twenty-four officers to form Highway Enforcement of Aggressive Traffic (H.E.A.T.). Since this formation, the H.E.A.T. team has maintained consistency across the state. In FFY 2014, the GOHS funded seventeen H.E.A.T) units across the state where speed and impaired driving crashes and fatalities are consistently high. GOHS will maintain the H.E.A.T. program in FFY 2015.



H.E.A.T Units were established for the purpose of reducing the number of driving incidents. This project will continue to focus on impaired driving and speeding, two of the main aggressive driving related violations. This will be accomplished through enforcement and education.

The overall goals of the H.E.A.T programs are to:

Reduce the number of impaired driving crashes in jurisdictions identified by 10% and to enforce laws targeting aggressive driving around Georgia.

### **Impaired Driving Assessment**

In FFY 2007, The GOHS requested the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) assistance in assessing Georgia's alcohol and drug-impaired driving countermeasures program. The Georgia Impaired Driving Assessment was conducted at the Georgia Tech Hotel and Conference Center, Atlanta, GA, from July 29 – August 3, 2007. Arrangements were made for program experts in Georgia to deliver briefings and provide support materials to the Assessment team on a wide range of topics over a three-day period.

At the conclusion of the assessment, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration team provided the GOHS with a compilation of priority and suggested recommendations. The following is the list of priority recommendations that GOHS plans to address over the next several years. GOHS will continue to identify and implement strategies to meet the recommendations in FFY 2015.

- Expand the SHSP impaired driver task team to include additional agencies and organizations which represent a broader spectrum of interest and involvement in impaired driving programs including, for example, youth programs
- Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD), underage prevention and enforcement (Children and Youth Coordinating Council, Georgia Network for Substance Abuse Prevention in Higher Education, Department of Revenue), highway enforcement (Department of Public Safety), diversity (minority population liaisons), Prosecuting Attorneys Council, Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), and the Probation Advisory Council.
- Designate an impaired driving coordinator who would assist with communication and coordination of all impaired driving program elements as a focal point for the State. This person and his/her position should be well-communicated to all traffic safety partners.
- Explore, adapt and adopt methods to achieve a level of self-sufficiency for impaired driving programs which have proven successful in other states, such as the New York's "STOP DWI" program and New Mexico's fine system.
- Design and implement a centralized statewide citation tracking system containing information about a citation from "cradle to grave".
- Coordinate and integrate the efforts and resources of local traffic safety prevention programs with Drug Free Communities and other local substance abuse prevention coalitions.
- Sponsor and participate in meaningful awards and recognition programs to provide positive reinforcement for DUI enforcement.
- Ensure that enforcement of impaired driving is an agency priority that is part of the annual strategic plan.
- Encourage Chiefs and Sheriffs' Associations to work with the appropriate entities to address ongoing issues related to administrative license hearings.
- Ascertain an accurate count and understanding of the caseload of the adjudication of impaired driving cases.
- Collect and analyze Department of Revenue data to develop programs to address DUI occurrence and crashes of habitual violators.
- Conduct a thorough management audit of the Administrative License Suspension (ALS) process to determine what the issues are, and what needs to be addressed to improve the adjudication process.
- Develop, fund, and implement a comprehensive, data-based marketing plan in support of impaired driving prevention.
- Develop procedures to use appropriate safety data (crashes, citations, driver suspension, mapping of crashes to citation and enforcement activities) to conduct impact evaluations.
- Link and integrate driver files with vehicle files.

### **Impaired Driving Task Team**

On July 10, 2013, Governor Nathan Deal signed an Executive Order creating an Impaired Driving Task Force. The purpose of the task force was to develop an Impaired Driving Strategic Plan which was submitted to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration on September 1, 2013. Since that time, the task force has met three times and developed an Impaired Driving Strategic Plan, which is being implemented in the state. The members of the task force represented impaired driving stakeholders in Georgia and included highway safety officials, judicial liaisons, law enforcement representatives and stakeholders from the private sector.