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Case Studies Suggest Practical Ways to Increase the Visibility of High-Visibility Enforcement Programs

High-visibility enforcement (HVE) models are an effective strategy to reduce impaired driving. They work by increasing drivers' perceived risk of being stopped and arrested by law enforcement if they choose to drive while impaired by alcohol or drugs. Two common enforcement strategies are sobriety checkpoints and saturation patrols. Checkpoints concentrate law enforcement officers at the roadside to identify impaired drivers who are passing through. Saturation patrols direct additional officers to patrol a limited area where impaired driving is prevalent. Both strategies use highly visible elements to ensure motorists see them. When publicity and communications combine with enforcement efforts, the result is a rise in awareness and the perception of an increased likelihood of detection of impaired driving among drivers.

Large and small law enforcement agencies conduct HVE campaigns throughout the year in a variety of ways, and each has common elements. NHTSA gathered information from HVE programs currently operating in the United States and documented six case studies that demonstrate different strategies. There are three counties (Anoka County, Minnesota; Charles County, Maryland; and Pasco County, Florida), one city (Escondido, California), one region of a State (Southeast Wisconsin), and one multiple-jurisdiction program (Delaware, Kentucky, North Carolina, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia).

Each case study describes the HVE program's history, enforcement strategies, visibility elements, operation, resources, use of media, educational components, funding, support from political leaders and the community, barriers encountered, strengths of the program, and statistics (such as number of checkpoints, number of officers per saturation patrol, impaired-driving crashes, arrests, or convictions before and after the program began), as available.

HVE Elements
All sites examined their driving while impaired (DWI) arrest and alcohol-involved crash data to identify high alcohol-involved locations in their jurisdictions that were most in need of HVE operations.

Checkpoints. Four of the case study sites conducted sobriety checkpoints including:

- Large-scale checkpoints with at least 10 staff;
- Small-scale checkpoints with 3 to 5 staff;
- Happy-hour checkpoints operated 4 to 7 p.m.;
- Nighttime checkpoints operated 9 p.m. to 2 a.m.;
- Mobile checkpoint operations that moved to a new location the same evening;
- Phantom checkpoints where law enforcement officers set up a checkpoint with signs and cones, but do not actually conduct one. One patrol car stays onsite to protect the equipment and to stop vehicles that display erratic driving behavior; and
- Holiday or special occasion checkpoints such as Saint Patrick's Day or Super Bowl weekend to address increased drinking associated with those occasions.

Saturation Patrols. All case study sites conducted saturation patrols, in which additional law enforcement officers patrolled a segment of roadway or a neighborhood looking for drivers who showed signs of impairment.

Increasing the Visibility. To make sure that passing motorists knew the purpose of the law enforcement activity, and to increase the visibility, the agencies used lighting and signs during the operations. Agencies placed lights, variable message boards, and large signs (often reflective and usually portable) near the entrance of a checkpoint or the segment of roadway selected for a saturation patrol. High-intensity lights increase the visibility and safety of checkpoint operations, and provide extra lighting for law enforcement activities. Several agencies used large vans or trailers where they conducted breath or blood testing, booked offenders, and handled administrative tasks. The vans or trailers were marked with reflective police insignia and anti-DWI slogans that added visual impact to the HVE operations. Some agencies attached permanent or temporary magnetic signs to saturation patrol cars identifying them as being part of DWI enforcement efforts. Some officers wore specialized insignia such as badges or reflective

vests to identify them as being with the anti-DWI efforts at checkpoints and on saturation patrols.

Media. Media raises awareness of enforcement operations and educates the community about impaired-driving issues. The large multiple jurisdiction site used paid media on TV and radio, and all sites sought earned media where local news outlets report the anti-DWI activity and results on television, radio, and in newspapers. Program officials provided press releases to local media to encourage news stories about program activities and wrote letters to the editor and articles for publication in the local media. Local businesses, schools, and churches promoted anti-DWI activities on their signs and marquees to raise awareness of anti-DWI activities. Some local bars and restaurants used program posters and coasters showing anti-DWI information specific to local enforcement activities. Officers gave drivers flyers or cards with program information at checkpoints or traffic stops. Highway billboards publicized enforcement efforts.

Summary

The report summarizes information gathered in discussions with case study officials that will be useful to communities that are interested in developing and conducting a HVE program. There are suggestions on how to identify the impaired-driving problem and assess where impaired driving stands as a public health issue in the community. Local impaired-driving or traffic safety task forces can provide the foundation and support for the HVE program. There are suggestions on how to go about combining resources with other law enforcement agencies, approaching potential barriers or opposition in the community, generating earned media, and building workable schedules. There are photographs of the programs and samples of forms and media each site used.

Download *Increasing Impaired-Driving Enforcement Visibility: Six Case Studies*, prepared by the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation at www.nhtsa.gov/staticfiles/nti/pdf/811716.pdf. Kari Kinnard was the Task Order Manager.

Common Elements of HVE Programs

HVE Element	Anoka County Minnesota	Charles County Maryland	Pasco County Florida	Escondido California	Southeast Wisconsin	Checkpoint Strikeforce[1]
Problem Site Identification	■	■	■	■	■	■
Checkpoints				■		■
Large scale		■	■			■
Small scale		■				■
Happy hour		■				■
Nighttime		■	■	■		■
Mobile						■
Phantom		■				■
Mock (for press events)						■
Holiday or special occasion		■	■	■		■
Saturation Patrols	■	■	■	■	■	■
Happy hour		■			■	■
Holiday or special occasion	■	■	■	■	■	■
High-Visibility Elements						
Lighted variable message signs	■	■		■	■	■
High-intensity lights		■	■	■		■
Large signs		■	■	■	■	■
Vans or trailers with special insignia	■	■	■	■	■	■
Specialized insignia on patrol cars	■[2]	■[3]			■	
Specialized insignia on officer vests	■				■	
Media						
Paid media						■
Earned media	■	■	■	■	■	■
Press releases	■	■	■	■	■	■
Letters to the editor or articles	■		■			■
Signs on business marquees		■			■	
Posters, coasters in establishments	■	■	■	■	■	
Flyers, cards given to stopped motorists	■	■	■	■	■	

[1] *Checkpoint Strikeforce* runs in Delaware, Kentucky, North Carolina, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia.
[2] Did initially but stopped.
[3] Sometimes

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