

NORTH DAKOTA IMPAIRED DRIVING Newsletter

from the desk of the TSRP Peter Halbach

"Sometimes we get tired and wonder if what we are doing is helping, BUT IT IS!" These words of encouragement were sent to me a few days ago by someone who knows all too well the consequences of impaired driving. Having lost her husband many years ago in an alcohol-related crash, she turned her family's tragedy into action and encourages others to do the same.

Every day in North Dakota highway traffic safety partners are working to save lives. To them Vision Zero – that no death on our roadways is acceptable – is more than words, it's our shared mission. Enforcement of our impaired driving laws is a vital part of that mission. This newsletter highlights the training offered to new peace officers throughout the year to make them better at recognizing impaired driving and removing impaired drivers from the road.

The Impaired Driving Conference held in June brought together law enforcement, attorneys and judges, with toxicology and other experts addressing emerging drug trends. Also, inside this issue are articles regarding the training provided by treatment courts, which have been shown to be effective in reducing recidivism.

These are only a part of the strategies needed. In July, the Highway Safety Division of the North Dakota of Transportation published the North Dakota Impaired Driving Strategic Plan (IDSP). The IDSP reflects the priorities, goals, and objectives established through the North Dakota Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP). This triennial plan was updated with input from the Impaired Driving Task Force and its four subcommittees. An excellent summary of these strategies can be found in a six-page article by our State Judicial Outreach Liaison, Judge John Grinsteiner (ret). See "One Size Does Not Fit All," **SJOL Newsletter, 2026 Issue No. 3**, State Judicial Outreach Liaison Newsletter | RTSSC (Rural Transportation Safety and Security Center).

The commitment of law enforcement is recognized by DUI Enforcement All-Star Nights. These officers are representative of the officers working every hour of every day to keep our roads safe. One of the All Stars, Trooper Shane Rothenberger of the North Dakota Highway Patrol, serves as the Tribal Cultural Liaison and has initiated advanced training in coordination with the U.S. Indian Police Academy – Advanced Training Center at Camp Grafton, near Devils Lake, North Dakota. In addition, a Drug Recognition Expert/ Standardized Field Sobriety Test Instructor In-Service is scheduled for December.

On October 1st the ND Impaired Driving Task Force met with the intention of seeing that the strategies of the IDSP are actively pursued. The task force members are working with the Coalition to Reduce Alcohol Harms to turn proposals into reality. Watch for news on this front.

In the words of my new friend, "Keep on fighting the good fight."

Volume 5, Issue 2

Welcome to the North Dakota Impaired Driving Newsletter.

This resource will provide training information, drug and alcohol trends, legal updates, toxicology, and more to keep you informed.

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Coalition Identifies Legislative Opportunities to Reduce Alcohol Impact in ND

A coalition formed to help all North Dakotans develop a health relationship with alcohol has identified several opportunities for constructive legislation to achieve the goal of reducing alcohol-associated harms in the state. The coalition was formed in 2025 under the auspices of the North Dakota Public Health Association Policy and Advocacy Committee. The areas of focus include:

- Change social norms around responsible alcohol use by supporting the ND Department of Health and Human Services Parents Lead campaign
- Reduce the overall volume of alcohol purchased and consumed by increasing the excise tax on alcohol products in North Dakota
- Increase the incentive for sobriety and increase safety on the roads by expanding the use of ignition interlock devices for convicted offenders
- Support safety in all local communities by establishing statewide uniform minimum standards for responsible beverage server training, defining overserving, and enforcement of alcohol laws.

The coalition is comprised of 21 members, with representation from the American Heart Association, local public health units, Soul Solutions of Fargo, the North Dakota Department of Transportation, Mothers Against Drunk Driving, and Sanford Health. ■



FATALITIES: 84

Crashes: **76**
Operators tested positive BAC: **19**
Operators tested negative BAC: **15**
Operators not tested: **0**
Fatalities from Alcohol Crashes: **23**
No Seat belt (for seat belt eligible vehicles) **35**
Speed-related fatalities: **25**
Pedestrian fatalities: **6**
Motorcycle fatalities: **10**
ATV/recreational vehicles: **6**
Fatal crash involved lane departure: **45**
Fatal crash involved a younger driver(s) 14-20 years old: **17**
Fatal crash involved an older driver(s) 65+ years old: **18**
Fatal crash involved a train: **2**
Fatal crash involved a commercial motor vehicle(s): **13**
Holiday fatalities: **7**

*Please note that there are crashes that are still under investigation and not yet categorized, currently at 43. North Dakota has a new Vision Zero page, please visit here: **Home | Vision Zero**. You can find a link to the 2024 North Dakota Crash Summary here: **2024 North Dakota Crash Summary**.

North Dakota Impaired Driving Conference

Leah Kelm, Regional Outreach Coordinator, Vision Zero



Recognizing impairment is only part of the challenge. Understanding the science, collecting, and documenting evidence, and clearly explaining those findings in court are all essential to impaired driving enforcement. The annual North Dakota Impaired Driving Conference, held June 9–11 in Bismarck, brought partners together for three days to explore those connections and strengthen their shared efforts to prevent tragedies on our roads.

Conference sessions went beyond the standardized field sobriety testing manuals, connected the dots between observed indicators and driving impairment, and highlighted best practices for collecting toxicology samples. A panel of prosecutors, defense attorneys, and judges examined an impaired driving case from different perspectives. An open discussion with toxicology experts also gave attendees an opportunity to ask questions about testing, interpreting results, and presenting evidence in court.

Emerging drug trends were another focus, with sessions covering marijuana products and potency, the reappearance of synthetic cannabinoids in North Dakota, and the challenges these substances present for impairment detection.

One notable session featured Robert Hayes, Western Region Project Manager for the International Association of Chiefs of Police's Drug Evaluation and Classification Program. Drawing on his work in this role and his 32-year law enforcement career, Hayes explored psilocybin's physical and psychological effects, methods of use, and microdosing trends. He also discussed the changing landscape of legalization and the challenges it presents for law enforcement and community safety.

Other out-of-state presenters included Amy Miles, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration Region 8 Toxicology Liaison; Jonathan Huber of the Seattle Police Department; and Andrew Farley of the King County Sheriff's Office.

Another standout session was a case study of State v. Bell, which highlighted lessons learned from the investigation and prosecution. The presentation covered the successful appeal of a ruling that suppressed chemical breath test evidence, challenges in preparing for trial, and the eventual change of plea and sentencing. Attendees also learned how those lessons could help guide future investigations and law enforcement procedures.

Thank you to everyone who attended and to this year's conference directors, ND Highway Patrol Trooper Tarek Chase, Judge John Grinsteiner, Judge Peter Halbach, School Resource Officer for Watford City PD Shannon Wellen, and Kelly Aberle, ND Department of Transportation Highway Safety Division Program Manager. ■















Two Ballparks, One Mission: Safer North Dakota Roads

Leah Kelm, Regional Outreach Coordinator, Vision Zero

Every life lost to impaired driving is more than a statistic. It is a person, a parent, a child, or a friend whose story was cut short by a 100% preventable crash. These events highlight the critical role of enforcement and recognize those dedicated to preventing these tragedies.

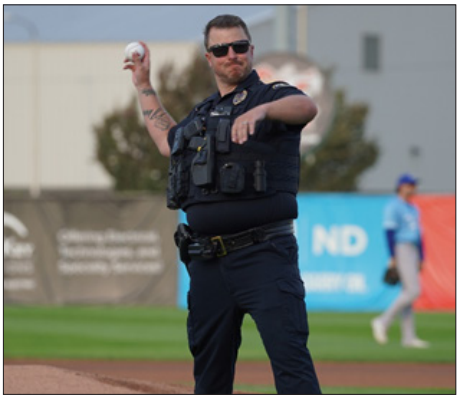
Congratulations to this year's honorees, and thank you for your service, sacrifice, and continued commitment to keeping North Dakota roads safe. ■

For the third year, Vision Zero honored law enforcement officers from across North Dakota whose outstanding dedication to impaired driving enforcement helps save lives and make our roadways safer.

DUI Enforcement All-Star Nights returned to eastern North Dakota this year, with recognition events held July 23 at a Grand Forks Spitfires game and August 17 at a Fargo-Moorhead RedHawks game. Honorees were nominated by supervisors within their agencies in recognition of their exceptional commitment to impaired driving enforcement. The events provided an opportunity to celebrate officers, deputies, and troopers for their work protecting communities across the state.

Through proactive enforcement, these law enforcement professionals work to identify impaired drivers and remove them from the road before a devastating crash can occur. Their dedication often means working nights, weekends, and holidays when impaired driving risks may be especially high. It also includes working overtime and providing saturation during high-visibility enforcement campaigns. Each traffic stop and impaired driving arrest represents a potential tragedy prevented and another step toward safer roads for everyone.











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2026 DUI Enforcement All-Stars

- Deputy Casey Ahmann | Ramsey County Sheriff's Department
- Corporal Russell Anthony | Devils Lake Police Department
- Deputy Chany Chany | Cass County Sheriff's Office
- Deputy Jacob Davis | Stutsman County Sheriff's Office
- Trooper Joshua Dura | North Dakota Highway Patrol
- Sergeant William Earl | Ramsey County Sheriff's Department
- Trooper Trevor Elfman | North Dakota Highway Patrol
- Deputy Kimberly Eversvik | Ramsey County Sheriff's Department
- Officer Brody Farmer | Wahpeton Police Department
- Officer Conner Heyerman | West Fargo Police Department
- Detective Chris Huard | Wahpeton Police Department
- Officer Joshua Husebye | Devils Lake Police Department
- Corporal Ryan Hutton | Cass County Sheriff's Office
- Officer Leah Jans | Fargo Police Department
- Officer Alex Jundt | Grand Forks Police Department
- Deputy Joachim Kazmierczak | Grand Forks County Sheriff's Office
- Officer Shelby Layman | Fargo Police Department
- Officer Joshua Marlow | Fargo Police Department
- Trooper Trevor Mishler | North Dakota Highway Patrol
- Trooper Ryan Mugan | North Dakota Highway Patrol
- Officer Austin Myogeto | Wahpeton Police Department
- Sergeant Kayla Olson | Jamestown Police Department
- Corporal James Opp | Grand Forks Police Department
- Trooper Shane Rothenberger | North Dakota Highway Patrol
- Trooper Thomas Steenstrup | North Dakota Highway Patrol
- Officer Timothy Sul | University of North Dakota Police Department
- Officer Bailey Tulius | West Fargo Police Department
- Sergeant John Vetsch | Walsh County Sheriff's Office
- Deputy Jacob Zielinski | Stutsman County Sheriff's Office



Treatment Court articles

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1. All Rise Impaired Driving Solutions Conducts Operational Tune Up at the NDSU Memorial Union, 2026

Nine treatment court teams from North Dakota and Minnesota—representing

approximately 85–90 treatment court professionals—recently came together to learn about updated treatment court best practices and explore ways to put those practices into action within their programs.

The training focused on strengthening treatment courts and better equipping teams to serve individuals with high-risk, high-needs circumstances, many of whom are impaired drivers. Stronger treatment court programs contribute to safer communities while also helping participants and their families build healthier, more stable lives.

A particularly meaningful part of the training was the presence of three treatment court graduates who now work as treatment court professionals, serving in roles such as peer support and treatment case aides. Their lived experience provides a unique and valuable perspective that can strengthen the therapeutic relationships treatment courts strive to build with participants.

Their journeys are a powerful reminder that treatment courts can do more than hold people accountable—they can help change lives.

By combining evidence-based practices with the perspective of those who have experienced the treatment court process firsthand, treatment court teams are better positioned to support lasting recovery, reduce recidivism, and move individuals and families toward healthier futures. ■

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Judge Connie Cleveland addresses attendees during the general session.



Judge Andrew Eyre (second from the left) and the Grand Forks Treatment Court team partake in one of the many small group breakout sessions.

2. North Dakota Treatment Court Team Members Attend RISE26 Conference in Nashville

Several North Dakota Treatment Court team members recently attended the RISE26 Conference in Nashville, TN, one of the nation's leading events focused on treatment courts, recovery, and justice system innovation.

The conference brought together judges, coordinators, probation officers, treatment providers, peer support specialists, and other professionals from across the country to share evidence-based practices, emerging research, and successful strategies for supporting individuals on their recovery journey.

Throughout the conference, North Dakota attendees participated in educational workshops, keynote presentations, and networking opportunities designed to strengthen treatment court programs and improve outcomes for participants. Topics included trauma-informed care, behavioral health, recovery support, family engagement, and collaborative team approaches.

By attending RISE26, North Dakota Treatment Court professionals gained valuable knowledge and new perspectives that they can bring back to their local programs. Their commitment to ongoing education and collaboration reflects a continued dedication to helping participants achieve lasting recovery, reduce recidivism, and build healthier communities across North Dakota. This training will strengthen treatment court teams throughout the state as they continue their important work of changing lives through accountability, treatment, and hope. ■



Police Officer Training

1. Law Enforcement Training Academy

The Law Enforcement Training Academy (LETA) serves licensed peace officers in the state of North Dakota. The LETA provides basic training to all newly hired officers from local, county, and state agencies. The 12-week Basic Academy encompasses all the fundamentals, skills, and knowledge for new officers to be successful. One area of significance is the detection, processing, and enforcement action on individuals who operate a motor vehicle while impaired.

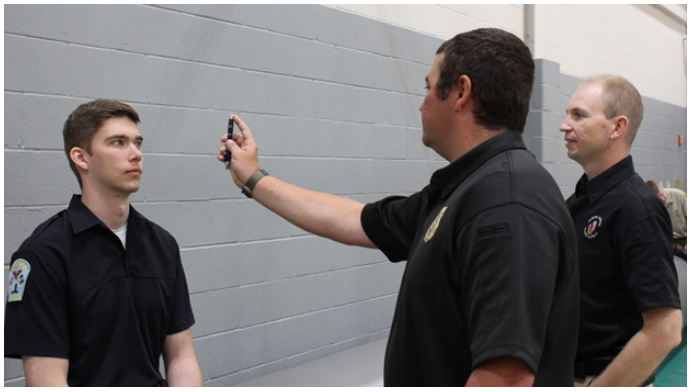
Over the course of two and a half days, students are trained on common indicators for impaired driving. This involves the detection of a traffic violation and developing reasonable suspicion to stop a motor vehicle. Once the stop occurs, students learn the importance of identifying common behavior, movement, and using their senses to detect possible impairment.

Students receive a significant amount of classroom instruction to establish a knowledge base of administering standardized field sobriety tests (SFSTs). After the knowledge base has been established, students begin the practical portion of their training. They practice supervised SFSTs in the presence of certified SFST instructors. At the end of the second day of training, students participate in the alcohol wet lab. For this phase of training, volunteers arrive and participate in controlled consumption of alcohol. Students then conduct hands-on practical application of the SFSTs on the volunteer drinkers. Students are paired in small groups and are supervised by the certified instructors.

In the final day, students are then presented with the actual BAC of the volunteer drinkers and establish their arrest or not arrest procedures. The course continues with knowledge and exercise of the administrative procedures. The course is designed to fully encompass the entirety of the driving under the influence (DUI) process in North Dakota.

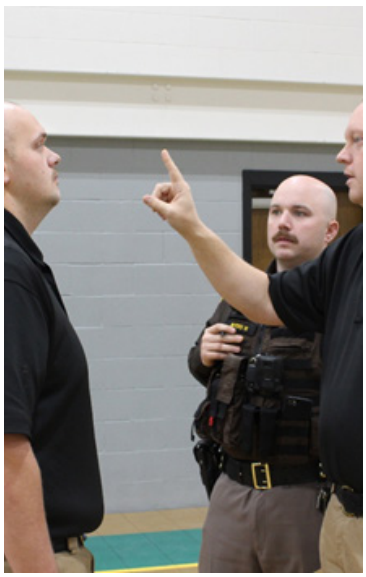
LETA's summer class graduated on August 21. The Fall Basic Academy started September 28 and will graduate on December 18th. LETA runs 3 Basic classes a year with an average of 36 students per class. ■

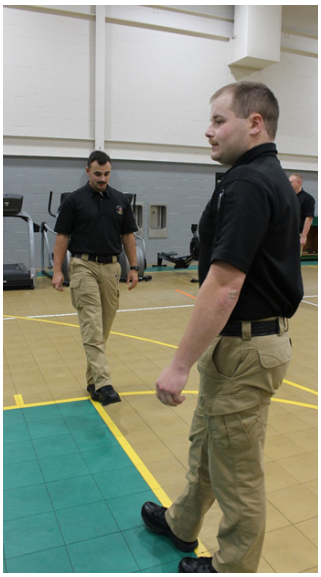
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2. Lake Region State College – Peace Officer Training Program

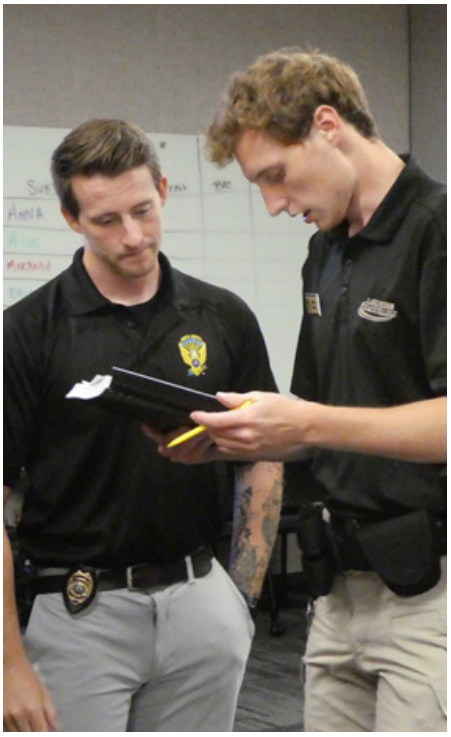
The Lake Region State College Peace Officer Training Program (LRSC POTP) offers a comprehensive police academy at three locations in North Dakota: Devils Lake in the Spring, West Fargo in the Summer, and Grand Forks in the Fall. The instructors are committed to supporting the success of students throughout their journey.



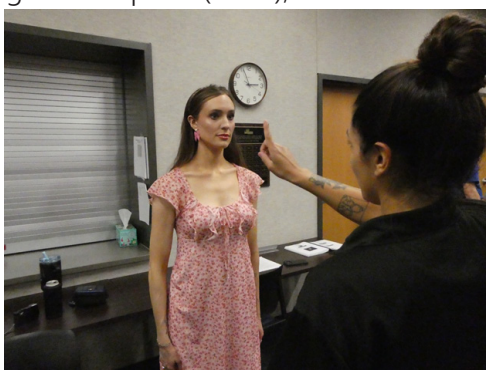
The academy follows the North Dakota Peace Officer Standards and Training (ND POST) Board curriculum and requirements to ensure students receive high-quality education and hands-on experience. One essential component is the Standardized Field Sobriety Test (SFST) class. An engaging three-day SFST course that includes classroom instruction and a wet lab, provides real-life, hands-on experience in a controlled environment.



First, students receive classroom instruction from instructors certified through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). Next, during the wet lab, students are paired to practice the SFST test battery, including the horizontal gaze nystagmus (HGN) test, one leg stand test, and the walk and turn test, on subjects who have consumed alcohol. Instructors observe and guide students to ensure all requirements are met. Finally, after the hands-on testing, students, instructors, and volunteers review the test results, including the blood alcohol concentration (BAC) outcomes for each participant, confirming the accuracy of the students' assessments.



SFST instructors are also Drug Recognition Experts (DREs), and students receive valuable classroom knowledge in this area. Participants consistently share how beneficial this immersive training is for their development, and they have gained practical skills that will serve them throughout their law enforcement career.





For more information on the LRSC POTP information can be found at: **Peace Officer Training | LakeRegion 2025** ■

Tribal Cultural Liaison – Shane Rotherberger, NDHP

Trooper Shane Rothenberger of the North Dakota Highway Patrol serves as the Tribal Cultural Liaison. Rotherberger has contacts in each tribal nation with which he coordinates, not only with regard to impaired driving, but anything law enforcement related. For example, he helps coordinate and provide state resources to locate missing people.



Rothenberger planned and coordinated the first ever Advanced Roadside Impaired Driving Enforcement (ARIDE) course at the United States Indian Police Academy - Advanced Training Center (USIPA ATC) in Camp Grafton on May 4 and 5. USIPA ATC hosted the course and opened it nationwide to any Tribal/BIA officer. A total of nine Tribal/BIA officers from North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, and Oklahoma, and three local agency law enforcement officers were trained during that course. Rothenberger is pictured with the class.

Rothenberger anticipates this training as the beginning of what will become a fruitful partnership with USIPA ATC. The benefits of the program are mutual because troopers have been able to enter drug interdiction courses that have been opened to state/local law enforcement at no cost.

Rothenberger continues to work to provide additional ARIDE courses there, while exploring the expansion into other courses relating to impaired driving enforcement. ■



DRE/SFST Instructor Inservice Announcement

The 2026 DRE/SFST Instructor Inservice will take place December 15-16 at the BSC National Energy Center of Excellence. The DRE/SFST Instructor Inservice provides updates regarding case law, training dates and local and national program updates. The Inservice will also allow time for discussion on improvements to the DRE/SFST programs and how they can be improved. For more information about registering go to **2026 DRE SFST Instructor In Service | Vision Zero** ■





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