



The Red Light Alert

New Report Shows Thousands of Repeat Drunk Drivers Evade Court-Ordered Penalties

San Francisco, CA (July 22, 2003) – Nearly half of repeat drunk drivers are returned to court for failing to comply with the terms of their sentence. This is a key finding from a landmark study that examines problems and proposes solutions directly from probation and parole officers who face special challenges in dealing with hard-core drunk-driving offenders. Often, these officers must manage staggering caseloads, with some officers being responsible for supervising more than 1,000 offenders.

These are the main conclusions of a new U.S. traffic safety study being released today by the Ottawa-based Traffic Injury Research Foundation (TIRF), during a presentation at the annual meeting of the National Conference of State Legislatures.

Issues on Monitoring

As part of the study, researchers surveyed 890 probation and parole officers from 41 states, identifying the top problems that impede the effective monitoring of hard core drunk drivers. In order of priority, these problems include:

non-compliance with court orders, overwhelming caseloads, and conflict between the two goals of enforcement and rehabilitation. In terms of caseload, for example, officers on average are responsible for more than 100 offenders, and in a few cases the number is significantly higher – in the thousands.



This is the fourth in a series of reports involving issues of intoxicated driving.

“Having now studied the entire process for dealing with hard-core drunk drivers, it is clear that the most immediate need is to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the monitoring process,” said Herb Simpson, TIRF’s president and CEO. “Until offenders can be adequately monitored and supervised, and penalties enforced, public safety cannot be ensured, and there is little hope that their behavior problems will be dealt with.”

Fourth Study in a Series

TIRF, an independent road safety institute, conducted the survey as the last phase of a comprehensive three-year study, “Stopping The Revolving Door: DWI System Improvements For Dealing With Hard Core Drinking Drivers.” This unique study examines problems and proposes solutions directly from police officers, prosecutors, judges, and probation and parole officers.

Top Issues

Specifically, the top three problems uncovered in the survey include:

- **Non-compliance:** Probation officers estimate that almost half (44%) of offenders fail to comply, to some extent, with the terms and conditions of their sentence. The solution? A majority of officers agree that more frequent contact with offenders, and more

*Consult your prosecutor before adopting practices suggested by reports in this newsletter.
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efficient communication with both treatment and service providers would facilitate the exchange of information and improve their ability to monitor offenders.

- **Caseload:** Probation populations generally have been increasing steadily for the past several years; the DWI population monitored by probation officers has risen even more sharply. Almost one in five offenders on probation has been sentenced for DWI, and officers are responsible for an average of more than 100 offenders. The solution? A vast majority of officers want to see reasonable limits placed on the size of caseloads to increase the quality of supervision they provide. Even if caseloads are not restricted, more probation officers are needed to cope with currently excessive demands for monitoring.
- **Conflicting Goals:** Probation officers often experience the conflict posed, on the one hand, by the need to monitor behavior and enforce compliance with the terms of probationary sentences, and on the other hand, by the need to assist in rehabilitative efforts and serve as a resource for offenders being integrated into the community. The solution? More resources are needed to make rehabilitation a priority for probation agencies, and, echoing judicial concerns,

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**Herb Simpson,
President of TIRF.**

officers believe more judges need education on the relationship between addiction and offending to ensure that appropriate sentences are imposed.

“We’ve gone through a 10 to 15-year period in which thousands of laws were added to the books, but now it’s time for a new era,” Simpson said. “We need to do a better job of providing police, prosecutors, judges, and probation officers with the tools and techniques to make the system perform as it should.”

The Response

The report was enthusiastically embraced by leaders in the probation and parole community.

“This study clearly articulates the frustrations we face daily,” said Carl Wicklund, executive director of the American Probation and Parole Association (APPA). “It does an excellent job in showing the limited resources and other challenges we have.”

“The hard-core drunk driver knows how to beat the system,” said Andrew Molloy, APPA president-elect. “If we can improve our use of technology and our exchange of information, we can better control and monitor offenders.”

About the Traffic Injury Research Foundation

Established in 1964 and headquartered in Ottawa, Canada,

TIRF’s mission is to reduce traffic-related deaths and injuries. They design, promote and implement effective programs and policies, based on sound research. TIRF is a registered charity and depends on grants, contracts, and donations to provide services for the public.

Editor’s Note: This was released by the Traffic Research Institute on July 22, 2003. Edited for space. For the complete report go to:

[www.trafficinjuryresearch.com/
whatNew/newsItemPDFs/
Report_Monitoring.pdf](http://www.trafficinjuryresearch.com/whatNew/newsItemPDFs/Report_Monitoring.pdf)

Up Coming Schedule of Events

- **Talking to a Jury—
Are You Getting Through?**

Augusta – October 20

Featured Topics:

Educating a Jury

First Impressions

The Visual Trial

Effective Voir Dire

- **PowerPoint Training**

Lansing – November 3

This hands-on one-day seminar is designed to teach prosecutors, with little or no knowledge of Microsoft PowerPoint the basic principles of the program, how to create compelling presentations, and ways to effectively use them in traffic safety proceedings and other trials. The morning will focus on learning the basics of the program. In the afternoon, each student will work on preparing a slideshow for one of their own cases.