



Maine Bureau of  
Highway Safety

# THE MAINE LIAISON



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## Strengthening your OUI cases

Greetings, and welcome to Spring...or so the calendar tells us! Jim and I are pleased to bring you our latest edition of The Maine Liaison with the goal of sharing relevant topics that span the highway safety landscape. This edition has an emphasis on impaired driving to support your operating under the influence of intoxicants investigations.

Contained within the newsletter are articles from our TSRP on recent Maine cases, a breakdown of the types and frequency of drugs found in blood and urine from the Health and Environmental Testing Lab, and the most current guidance on the 15-minute observation period compiled from our partners at MCJA, HETL, DAs, and TSRP. Finally, we have the save-the-date information on the upcoming Maine Impaired Driving Summit.

We are here to support your ongoing hard work in all aspects of highway safety enforcement. Please reach out anytime that we can be of assistance to you or your agency.

## Your LEL Contacts:

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# Q1 2026 Traffic Fatalities

The preliminary numbers for fatal crashes from January 1, 2026 to March 31, 2026 are generally trending in a positive direction, as compared to the past 5 years of data. Of the 25 fatalities in Q1 2026, those came from 23 fatal crashes, two of which were double fatal crashes. 16 crashes occurred during daylight hours, while 7 occurred during nighttime hours. 17 of the fatalities were drivers (11 male, 6 female) with an average age of 36. One crash resulted in a passenger fatality. In these first 3 months, 7 pedestrian crashes have resulted in 7 fatalities. If you need more information or clarification of fatal crash data, please reach out to Nathan.McLaughlin@maine.gov.

TRAFFIC FATALITIES	
<b>Traffic Fatalities through: March 31, 2026</b>	
<b>25</b>	
*comparable prior years through March 31 of respective year	
*2025	*2024
<b>37</b>	<b>28</b>
*2023	*2022
<b>14</b>	<b>33</b>

## The Maine OUI Guide (5th ed.)

September 2025



Original Version - July 2020  
Edited, Annotated, and Researched by:

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Traffic Safety Resource Prosecutor  
Maine Bureau of Highway Safety

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Additional Research by:  
Hon. John David Kennedy (Ret.)

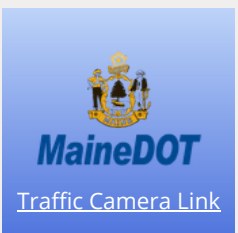
2<sup>nd</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup> Edition Edits and Additions by:

Joshua K. Saucier, Esq. & Scott Mattox, Esq.  
Traffic Safety Resource Prosecutors  
Maine Bureau of Highway Safety



**RIGHT NOW 50 MILLION**  
VEHICLES ON THE ROAD HAVE OPEN SAFETY RECALLS

Is yours one of them?



The 5<sup>th</sup> edition of the Maine OUI Guide is now available. The "Guide" discusses commonly encountered situations in typical impaired driving scenarios and applies relevant case law, statutory law, law enforcement training material, and empirical data to assist practitioners. To access a digital copy, [use this link](#). Also available are the SFST pocket guides. These can be obtained from MCJA or your LEL's.

## BUREAU OF HIGHWAY SAFETY

*Coordinators Corner*

### Programmatic Updates

BHS media products have a new look. We've launched four PSAs with a focus on Distracted Driving, Unattended Passengers, Commercial Motor Vehicles, and Young Drivers. They can be viewed on our [YouTube Channel](#).

In addition, 4 new handouts were created and are up ready for download on [our website](#).

Reach out to [Nicholas.Brown@maine.gov](mailto:Nicholas.Brown@maine.gov) for any media questions.

### Forensic Phlebotomy

Our most current on call list of trained FP professionals can be found [HERE](#).

For more information about the Forensic Phlebotomy program, please contact [Kasey.Theriault@Maine.gov](mailto:Kasey.Theriault@Maine.gov).



### Traffic Safety Educator

Alliance Highway Safety is our partner in education. Their efforts focus on helping young drivers build safe habits before they become routine. By combining hands-on learning, real-world demonstrations, and community engagement, the program shows teens what can happen when they take risks behind the wheel and how simple choices can prevent tragedy. One of the most popular tools is the [seat belt convincer](#), a device that safely simulates the force of a low-speed crash.

If you would like to book these services for your event, please e-mail [info@alliancehighwaysafety.com](mailto:info@alliancehighwaysafety.com).



### We're here to help!

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# STRENGTHEN YOUR OUI CASE

## 15-Minute Observation Period

In a collaborative effort to strengthen OUI investigations, the following document is the most current best practice for the 15-minute observation period and will be incorporated into OUI training materials at MCJA. This series of steps must be followed to ensure a breath sample is not invalidated due to a missed or hurried step. Let this information support your case in a way that ensures the hard work of HETL and BHS to maintain breath testing devices across our state strengthens your OUI cases.

### **15 Minute Observation Pre-Test Period**

Residual mouth alcohol is a known source of potential contamination in breath testing. The 15-minute observation period is one of the mechanisms to safeguard against mouth alcohol impacting the breath alcohol test result. This is fundamental, effective and a very important technique to prevent the influence of residual mouth alcohol. Fifteen minutes has been determined to be a long enough interval to allow for residual mouth alcohol to absorb or evaporate. Furthermore, no new alcohol should be introduced into the mouth, either externally or via the stomach, during this time.

**Operators should take caution to conduct the observation period properly, as there is much external scrutiny in this area.**

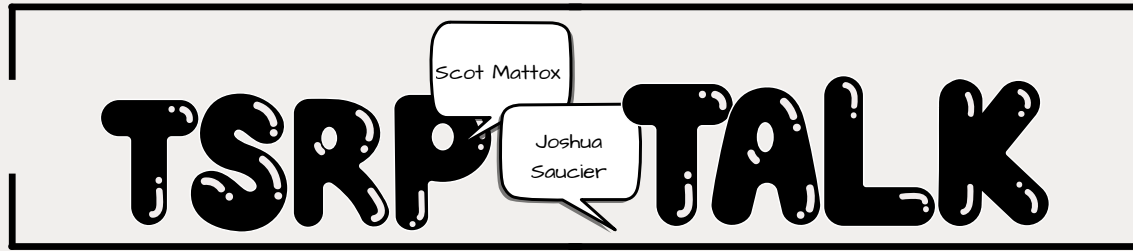
- Prior to beginning the 15-minute observation period, breath testing device operators should take a few moments to gather all supplies and paperwork and remove and remedy any distractions.
- The 15-minute observation period must only be conducted by certified breath testing device operators. Best practice is for the same certified operator to complete the observation period and the entire testing sequence.
- The 15-minute observation period must take place at the breath testing device location. Most breath testing device sites are monitored by video. Know where the camera is located. Preserve a copy of the video for discovery, if applicable.
- The 15-minute observation period begins with a mouth check.
- The mouth check is a visual inspection looking for foreign objects. If foreign object(s) are found, the subject should be instructed to remove them. Some examples of items to be removed include chewing gum, candy, wads of chewing tobacco, and oral pouch products.

# STRENGTHEN YOUR OUI CASE

## 15-Minute Observation Period

- Dental and orthodontic appliances and mouth jewelry have not been shown to impact the breath alcohol results. Therefore, it is not necessary to remove those items before a breath test.
- Blood in the mouth has not been shown to impact the breath alcohol results. The presence of blood, as noted by the certified operator, may trigger the operator to choose a blood alcohol test for logistical, medical, and biosafety reasons.
- Use the clock on the breath testing device to document the start of the observation period. The start of the observation period is needed during the data entry portion of the breath test.
- The certified breath testing device operator must have visual and audible observation of the subject for at least 15 minutes prior to administering the first breath sample and continue observation throughout the duration of the entire testing sequence including the two minutes between breath samples.
- The operator must remain in the presence of the subject. Breaks in observation require another mouth check, 15-minute observation period prior to the collection of the first breath sample and continue observation throughout the duration of the entire testing sequence including the two minutes between breath samples.
- The certified breath testing device operator is to observe the subject for the following:
  - eating, drinking, or smoking
  - burping, belching, regurgitating, or vomiting
  - placing items in their mouth (including hands and fingers)
- Observation of any one of these events or conditions compromises the required 15-minute observation period. The entire testing sequence must begin anew, requiring another mouth check, and 15-minute observation period prior to the collection of the first breath sample and continue observation throughout the duration of the entire testing sequence including the two minutes between breath samples.





## Case Law Updates – State v. Davis and State v. Rhoades

*By: Joshua Saucier, Assistant TSRP, Maine*

This first quarter of 2026 produced two impaired driving cases of which you should be aware. They are State v. Davis<sup>[i]</sup> and State v. Rhoades.<sup>[ii]</sup> Both cases originate, and each is a “good” case for impaired driving investigation and prosecution in Maine. A number of issues arise in each case, but the focus of this article will be limited to the issues pertinent to both investigation and prosecution of impaired driving (i.e., discovery processes will not be discussed herein). When it comes to Davis, this article will focus on the potential issue of coercing a breath test. Then, in discussing Rhoades, this article will concentrate on the issues of speed estimation as reasonable articulable suspicion to stop a vehicle, admissibility of Intoxilyzer tests, and a defendant’s Confrontation Clause rights as they pertain to a breath test.

### **I. State v. Davis and the Coercing A Breath Test: You Can, but Should You?**

On May 26, 2023, Davis was, with the appropriate probable cause, arrested by an officer with the Orono Police Department.<sup>[i]</sup> Davis was taken back to the station to perform an Intoxilyzer test, and the processes for such a test were begun.<sup>[ii]</sup> During the fifteen-minute observation period, Mr. Davis began to express doubt about taking the breath test, indicating that he would not consent to it. The officer read Form DI-140 (the “green form”) to Davis.<sup>[iii]</sup> The officer then informed Davis that if he took the breath test, he would get a summons and be allowed to go home.<sup>[iv]</sup> He also told Davis that if he did not take the test, he was going to go to jail, that not doing a test “just makes things worse,” and that Davis “should blow” into the instrument.<sup>[v]</sup> Davis eventually blew into the instrument and was subsequently charged with OUI.<sup>[vi]</sup>

Davis filed a motion to suppress and argued that his breath test should be suppressed because it was the result of coercive actions by the police officer.<sup>[i]</sup> The court denied Davis’s motion to suppress, finding that consent was not needed for the breath test.<sup>[ii]</sup> The Law Court agreed.<sup>[iii]</sup> Both the suppression court and the Law Court cited Birchfield v. North Dakota<sup>[iv]</sup> for their decision.  
[v]



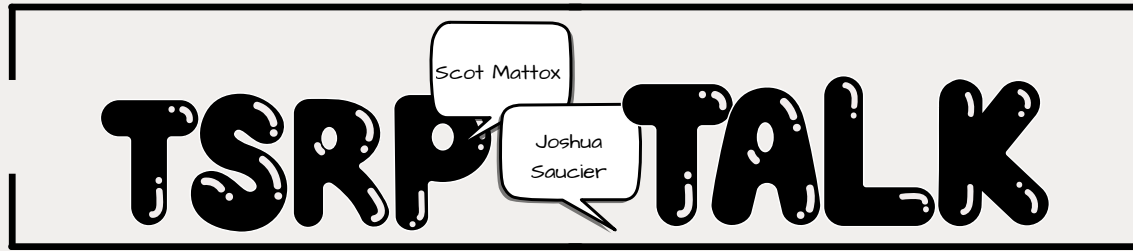
## Case Law Updates – State v. Davis and State v. Rhoades

*By: Joshua Saucier, Assistant TSRP, Maine*

Birchfield, as some readers may remember, dealt with both breath and blood tests.[i] It further dealt with the legality of criminal punishments, by way of separate crimes, for refusing either a breath or blood test.[ii] Either test, be it a breath test or blood test, was considered a search for the purposes of the constitution.[iii] Given that a state cannot punish someone for requiring it to comply with the Fourth Amendment, the separate crimes of refusing to take a chemical test could only be legal if a defendant did not have a Fourth Amendment right to refuse a test.[iv] This means that, because the statutes did not require a warrant for them to take effect, some exception must have applied in every circumstance in which the statute came into effect for it to be facially valid under the constitution. Keep in mind that only one exception needed to apply. An officer needs to comply with the Fourth Amendment in (at least) one way but not in every potential way.

In Birchfield, the Supreme Court decided that suspects, upon a valid impaired driving arrest, did not have the right to refuse a breath test.[v] In so deciding, the Supreme Court found that a breath test is valid as a search incident to arrest when a suspect is arrested, upon probable cause, for impaired driving.[i] Thus, Davis is, as the suppression court and Law Court noted, just an extension of Birchfield. Because the Intoxilyzer test was valid as a search incident to arrest, it did not matter if the officer had the suspect's consent (a different Fourth Amendment exception), and coercion is only relevant to undermining consent. This means, assuming that there was probable cause for your impaired driving arrest, you could tell a suspect that they had to submit to a breath test or use tactics, which were coercive, like those of the Orono Police Department officer in this case.

The question of if you should use those tactics is different. Remember that the Birchfield decision treated blood tests very differently than it treated breath tests.[i] Blood tests were not valid searches into to arrest. Instead, a blood test was found to require exigent circumstances, consent, or a search warrant.[ii] If you use coercive tactics to obtain a breath test and then find that a breath test was insufficient for your investigation (e.g., it's drug-OUI) or find that the Intoxilyzer is down for maintenance, you will need exigent circumstances, consent, or a search warrant to obtain that blood sample. After using coercive tactics, it may be more difficult to obtain valid consent. The choice is up to the individual officer and may be a different decision in each factual scenario, but you should be sure to consider the "what if" of an Intoxilyzer test not being practical or possible when you make that choice.



## Case Law Updates – State v. Davis and State v. Rhoades

*By: Joshua Saucier, Assistant TSRP, Maine*

### II. State v. Rhoades: Visually Estimated Speeds and Reaffirming Beeler

On September 28, 2022, a Lincoln Police Department officer was monitoring traffic and observed a red pickup truck.[i] The officer visually estimated the truck's speed to be 55 miles per hour, in an area where the speed limit was 35 miles per hour.[ii] The officer stopped the vehicle, never obtaining a radar reading.[iii] Eventually, the officer arrested Rhoades and took him to the police station for an Intoxilyzer test.[iv] Rhoades blew a .16.[v]

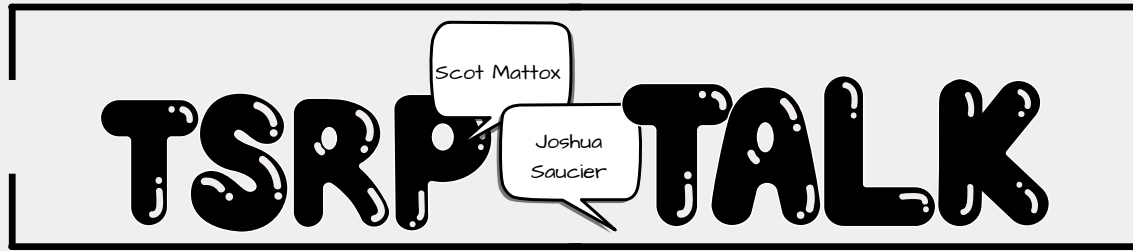
Rhoades was charged with felony OUI for having two priors within a ten-year period.[vi] Rhoades filed a motion to suppress, arguing that the officer did not have reasonable articulable suspicion to stop him.[vii] The suppression court denied the motion.[viii]

At trial, the officer testified as to the process he used in obtaining a breath sample, that if there were issues, an error code would have appeared, and that no error codes appeared.[ix] Maria Pease then testified about the annual checks and operation of the Intoxilyzer.[x] She was unsure if she or another chemist performed the relevant semi-annual check and certification of the Intoxilyzer at the Lincoln Police Department.[xi] The court then admitted the breath test result over the defense's objection that the state had not shown the reliability of the breath test.[xii] Rhoades appealed both the decision to deny his motion to suppress and to admit the Intoxilyzer test.[xiii]

In upholding the legality of the traffic stop, the Law Court noted that the officer was trained to visually estimate the speeds of vehicles, used that training in this day-to-day work, and was generally accurate in his estimates.[xiv] The court then noted further that the estimated speed was not close to the speed limit and was, in fact, an estimate of a vehicle exceeding the speed limit by 20 miles per hour.[xv]

Moving onto the Intoxilyzer test, the Law Court found that Maria Pease's testimony was sufficient to prove the reliability of the breath test and, in so doing, cited State v. Beeler.[i] On appeal, however, Rhoades argued that the admission of the Intoxilyzer test violated his Confrontation Clause rights under the U.S. Constitution.[ii] The Law Court again, citing Beeler, confirmed that breath tests are non-testimonial because they are instrument generated data, and, thus, do not implicate the Confrontation Clause.[iii] This, the Law Court continued, does not change because a chemist testifies to the reliability of the test.[iv]





## Case Law Updates – State v. Davis and State v. Rhoades

*By: Joshua Saucier, Assistant TSRP, Maine*

### III. Conclusion

The first quarter of 2026 produced two noteworthy cases in Maine OUI law. The first case, Davis, reminds us that the state need only comply with the Fourth Amendment in one way and not all potential ways. It also reminds us that coercion undermines the consent exception to the Fourth Amendment, but it does not – for instance – undermine the search incident to arrest exception. Officers should still be careful in choosing when to use coercive language to obtain a breath test because when circumstances change and it turns out that a blood test is needed, consent could be pivotal. Officers must also be aware that there is a limit to the amount and degree of coercive language or tactics that could be used; searches must, after all, remain reasonable under the Fourth Amendment.<sup>[i]</sup>

Rhoades solidifies that a motor vehicle stop can be based upon a visual estimation of speed if that estimation is well above the speed limit, an officer is properly trained, and the officer uses that training on a regular basis. It also reiterates holdings from Beeler, including that breath test results are admissible based upon their reliability as demonstrated through a laboratory witness and that breath testing results are nontestimonial. Prosecutors should also be aware of and read Rhoades for its discovery implications, though such were not covered in this article

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1. [1] 2026 ME 16, \_\_ A.3d \_\_.  
 2. [1] 2026 ME 23, \_\_ A.3d \_\_.  
 3. [1] Davis, 2026 ME 16, ¶ 2, \_\_ A.3d \_\_.  
 4. [1] *Id.* ¶ 3.  
 5. [1] *Id.*  
 6. [1] *Id.* ¶¶ 3-5.  
 7. [1] *Id.*  
 8. [1] Note that the actual BAC is not provided in the decision.  
 9. [1] Davis, 2026 ME 16, ¶ 6, \_\_ A.3d \_\_.  
 10. [1] *Id.*  
 11. [1] *Id.* ¶¶ 1, 8-9.  
 12. [1] 579 U.S. 438 (2016).  
 13. [1] Davis, 2026 ME 16, ¶¶ 6, 8-9 \_\_ A.3d \_\_.  
 14. [1] See Birchfield, 579 U.S. 438, 450-54 (2016).  
 15. [1] *Id.* at 454.  
 16. [1] See *id.* at 454-55.  
 17. [1] See *id.*  
 18. [1] *Id.* at 474.  
 19. [1] *Id.*  
 20. [1] *Id.* at 474.  
 21. [1] *Id.* at 474, 476-77, 478.  
 22. [1] Rhoades, 2026 ME 23, ¶ 3, \_\_ A.3d \_\_.  
 23. [1] *Id.* ¶ 24.  
 24. [1] *Id.* ¶ 3, 24.  
 25. [1] *Id.* ¶ 7.  
 26. [1] *Id.* ¶ 9.  
 27. [1] *Id.* ¶ 10.  
 28. [1] *Id.* ¶ 11.  
 29. [1] *Id.*  
 30. [1] *Id.* ¶ 17.  
 31. [1] *Id.* ¶ 18-19.  
 32. [1] *Id.*  
 33. [1] *Id.* ¶ 20.  
 34. [1] *Id.* ¶ 1.  
 35. [1] *Id.* ¶ 23.  
 36. [1] *Id.* ¶ 24.  
 37. [1] *Id.* ¶¶ 30-32.  
 38. [1] *Id.* ¶ 33.  
 39. [1] *Id.* ¶ 34.  
 40. [1] See *id.* ¶ 35.  
 41. [1] See e.g., Davis, 2026 ME 16, ¶ 10, \_\_ A.3d \_\_.



# DIRIGO SAFETY, LLC

PUBLIC SAFETY ADVOCATES



Dirigo Safety's newsletter titled "What's New at Dirigo Safety" can be found [here!](#)

### Interview and Interrogation Techniques

April 20-21 0800-1600  
Dirigo Safety, Auburn ME

Participants will gain practical tools to conduct more effective interviews and interrogations across a range of investigative scenarios.

Price: \$500

### OUI Fundamentals & OUI after the Arrest

May 20 & 21, 0800-1600  
York County Regional Training Center  
79 First County Way, Alfred, ME

Participants will sharpen their OUI investigation skills from the traffic stop to report writing and courtroom testimony.

Price: Free, Sponsored by BHS!

### Green Lab: Cannabis Impairment Detection Training

April 16, 2026 0800-1700  
Dirigo Safety, Auburn ME

Price: FREE for Maine LEO's - Sponsored by OCP.  
\$600 for Non-Maine LEO's  
Lunch will be provided, limited seats available!

### Welcome to Dirigo Safety, LLC's blog and news page!

[Here](#), you'll find the latest updates and information relevant to law enforcement in Maine and New England. We cover various topics, including mental health, trends, and best practices in the field.



## Updates From

### Impaired Driving Enforcement Training Unit



ARIDE training continues to be a focus for the Impaired Driving Enforcement Training Unit. Plans are underway to host ARIDE trainings in May in the Brunswick area, as well as a training in York County in June.

Congratulations to our newest DRE's who completed training and returned to Maine fully certified after a week of training and field work in Jacksonville, Florida. The DRE curriculum includes this trip for students to perform all required DRE evaluations in 2 days instead of spreading them over several weeks or months back here in Maine. The team photo is attached on Pg. 11.

For more information about Maine DRE's program, contact Don Finnegan [Edwin.D.Finnegan@maine.gov](mailto:Edwin.D.Finnegan@maine.gov).



# Maine Impaired Driving Summit

**SAVE THE DATE**



**June 24, 2026**

**Holiday Inn By The Bay  
Portland, Maine**





# Traffic Safety Marketing

Powered by NHTSA



## NHTSA Campaigns Happening Now & Upcoming

Traffic Safety Marketing powered by NHTSA is a free resource for social media content that can be plug and play for current and upcoming NHTSA campaigns. These are just a few examples of current content that are ready for you. simply click on any image to redirect you to the TSM webpage.

## National Distracted Driving Awareness Month

April is National Distracted Driving Awareness Month and you'll see increased communication related to distracted driving. Use any of the material on this page throughout the month, except for certain days in April when a national high-visibility enforcement mobilization is happening. Your paragraph text



### National Distracted Driving Awareness Month

Distracted Driving

This campaign runs year-round, when high-visibility enforcement is not taking place, and focuses on social norming as a way of encouraging drivers to focus on the road and not drive distracted

Apr 1, 2026 - Apr 30, 2026



### National Enforcement | Put the Phone Away or Pay

Distracted Driving

This high-visibility enforcement campaign runs during a specific time of the year. Messaging should include the consequences of distracted driving and be supported by increased law enforcement.

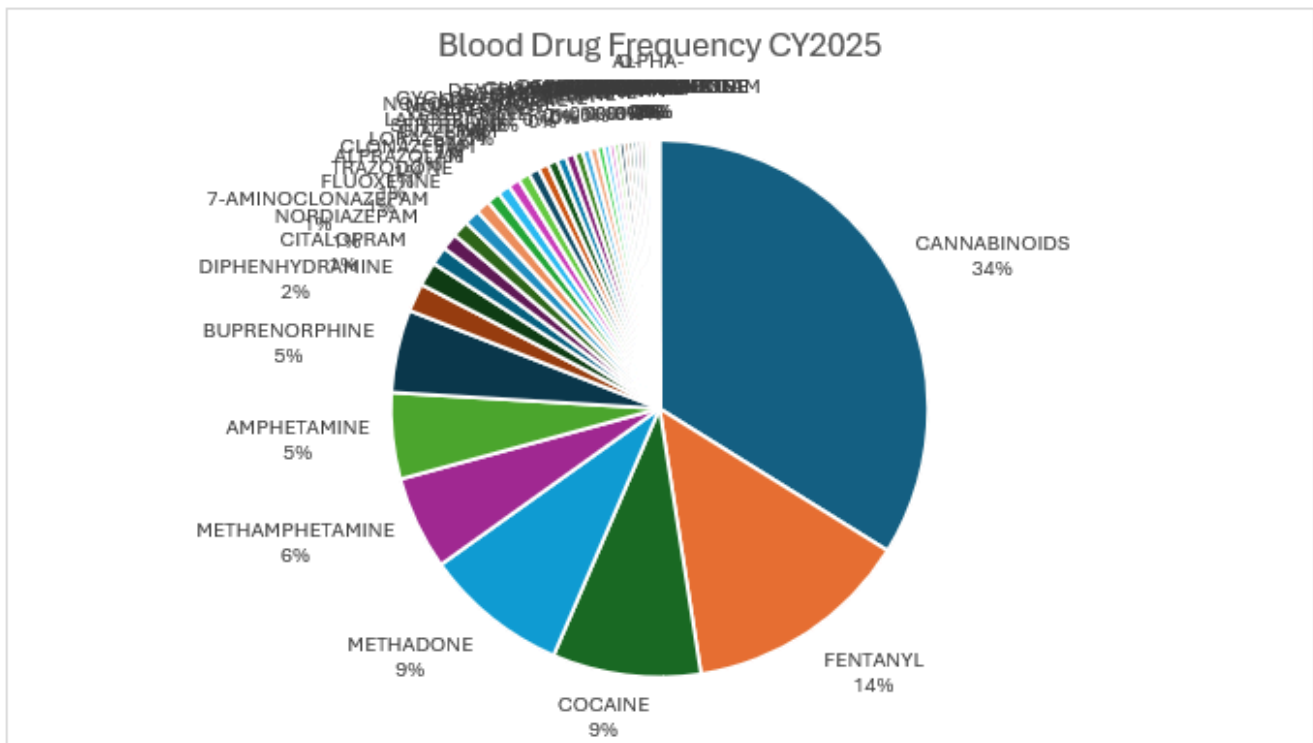
Apr 6, 2026 - Apr 13, 2026

# CHEMIST CORNER

Maine CDC-DHHS:  
Health & Environmental Testing Laboratory:  
Forensic Chemistry Section: Toxicology

## Chemist Corner

### 2025 Forensic Toxicology Statistics



Top 5 Most Frequently Seen Drugs (metabolites included with parent drug)
Cannabinoids
Fentanyl
Cocaine
Methadone
Methamphetamine

OUI/DUID Blood Drug Cases Submitted to HETL	
DRE Involved	49%
No DRE	51%

6% of blood cases had no drugs detected





# CHEMIST CORNER

Maine CDC-DHHS:  
Health & Environmental Testing Laboratory:  
Forensic Chemistry Section: Toxicology

## Breath Alcohol Program Updates

10 new Intoxilyzer 9000s scheduled to be distributed to districts 6, 7, & 8 during the Spring 2026 Approvals. *(Distribution priority is based on historical usage, with high usages sites within a district receiving new instruments first.)*



- Districts 1 & 2: at full saturation
- Districts 3, 4, & 5: at 60% saturation (all high usage sites have been converted to 9000s)
- Districts 6, 7, & 8: will be receiving 10 instruments during Spring 2026 travel.

**REMINDER: Transition training is required to use the Intoxilyzer 9000 instruments.**

# Highway Safety Partnerships



The Maine State Police S.P.I.D.R.E (State Police Impaired Driving Reduction Enforcement) Team is to be comprised of members of the State Police who are highly motivated and aggressive in the detection and apprehension of impaired drivers, with the ultimate achievement of reducing impaired operation crashes and fatalities on Maine's roadways. The team specifically seeks to operate in locations across our State where a law enforcement presence is sparse or where impaired driving is suspected to be a problem.

The S.P.I.D.R.E team is funded by grants through the Maine Bureau of Highway Safety. Both by request and using crash data, the S.P.I.D.R.E team will deploy its team of Troopers in the following ways, according to the geographic area selected:

- A saturation roving patrol group of troopers is deployed into an area where impaired operation has been recognized and subsequently has a high likelihood of impaired operator contacts/arrests.
- An O.U.I Roadblock – where Troopers will be deployed to an area of “high risk/frequency” of suspected impaired operators. Areas include large public events such as concerts, races, and outdoor events.
- Impaired Operation Details. These details will be staffed by a Trooper to work in a prescribed area who will conduct traffic stops with emphasis on the investigation of impaired operators.

In any of these types of deployments, collaboration with local law enforcement continues to be encouraged to make the program even stronger. If you would like to partner with the S.P.I.D.R.E team in your area or have specific questions about the program, please contact Specialist [Haley.L.Fleming@maine.gov](mailto:Haley.L.Fleming@maine.gov).



# Driving in the Rain and Other Spring Driving Tips

Cautious driving and proper car care are important aspects of staying safe in the rain.

Winter isn't the only season with dangerous driving conditions. Driving in the rain is hazardous as well, particularly in the spring when showers are common.

Three-quarters of all weather-related crashes occur on wet pavement, according to the [Federal Highway Administration](#), and nearly half happen during rainfall.

"A wet road is a treacherous road, even after a gentle sprinkle," said Jillian Young, Director of Public Relations for AAA Northeast. "As little as 1/12 of an inch of water can cause new tires to lose traction with the road at speeds as low as 35 mph. When it rains, slow down and give yourself extra room to stop."

## Hydroplaning

Hydroplaning – when a layer of water separates a vehicle's tires from the ground and causes loss of traction, is one of the most dangerous situations caused by driving in the rain.

"When hydroplaning, you are literally riding on top of water without any control of your vehicle," said [AAA Car Doctor John Paul](#).

The first 10 minutes of a downpour present the highest risk for hydroplaning, which occurs when tires can't displace enough water from their treads. Though it can happen with any tire and at any speed, it's best to avoid driving on worn tires and to go slower in wet conditions to decrease your risk.

Follow these tips to avoid hydroplaning and maintain control of your car.

**Check your tire treads.** Tires with fewer than 4/32 inches of tread should be replaced. You can check by inserting a quarter into a tread with Washington's head facing down. If you can't see the top of his head, the tire has at least 4/32 inches of tread.

Inflate your tires to the manufacturer's recommendations. Underinflated tires don't have the same capacity for displacing water as tires that are properly inflated, making driving in the rain potentially more dangerous.

Follow the leader. Try to drive in the tracks of the car in front of you for a clearer path.

Leave extra room. A loss of traction can make it tougher to stop quickly. If you typically leave three seconds of space between you and the vehicle in front of you, Paul recommends adding one second for rain and two seconds for rain and darkness.

Stay in the middle. If you're on the highway, try to stay in the center lane. Many roadways have a crown that sends water to the right and left lanes.

Avoid cruise control. If you have to slow down in wet weather, you'll do so by taking your foot off the accelerator. But if cruise control is engaged, your foot is already off the accelerator. You want as much control as possible when driving in wet weather. Don't give any away to cruise control.



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8



## Potholes

Potholes are another spring danger, the result of winter's wrath on local roads. What's worse, heavy rain can sometimes fill potholes, hiding them from view.

Striking potholes, even at low speeds, can be dangerous and expensive. A survey from AAA found that 1 in 10 drivers sustained vehicle damage significant enough to warrant a repair after hitting a pothole. With an average price tag of almost \$600 per repair, damage caused by potholes cost drivers a staggering \$26.5 billion.

"Snow, ice, sand and salt can leave roads in pretty bad shape, and the repeated freezing and thawing of moisture seeps through road surfaces and causes potholes," said Barbara Ward, a traffic safety specialist with AAA Northeast. "Keep your eyes peeled for bad road conditions, but if you can't avoid hitting a pothole, don't brake during the pothole impact. Instead, apply the brakes just before hitting the pothole and release them just prior to impact. Less severe damage occurs when a tire is rolling than when it's skidding over a hole during braking."

## Reduced Visibility

The harder it's raining, the harder it is to see lane markings, signage and other vehicles. The situation can be even worse for drivers who neglect basic car care.

Remember these maintenance tips to keep your sight line clear while driving in the rain.

Keep it clean. Maintaining visibility starts with keeping your windshield and windows clean. You'll want to clean the insides of both regularly.

Check your wiper blades. The average windshield wiper blade lasts about six months to a year. You can tell if a blade is starting to go if it leaves streaks behind.

Use the defroster. Moisture inside a vehicle can create a fog on the windows. Paul recommends using defrosters with the air conditioning on and the vents open for fresh air. "Air conditioning, by design, dries the air," he said.

Turn on your lights. Your headlights are valuable equipment for battling low visibility when driving in the rain. You'll want to turn them on even if you're just passing through a light sun shower. It will help you see better, and a lot of states require drivers to turn on their headlights when using windshield wipers. While you may be tempted to go with the high beams, low beams are more effective during rain and fog. Don't forget to periodically clean your headlights, too. Mud and dirt can cloud lenses, reducing illumination by up to 90%.

Stop and wait. If it's raining so hard that none of these steps alleviate visibility issues, it's wise to find a safe place to pull over and wait until the weather lets up. Rest areas or protected areas off the highway are your best bets. If you must stop on the roadside, pull off the road as far as possible and turn your emergency flashers on to help other drivers see you.



## Deep Water

If you're facing a storm that brings several inches of rain, it's best to stay off the road when possible, and not just for your personal safety.

Vehicles traveling through water that's deep enough to be pulled into the engine can suffer from hydrostatic lockup. In layman's terms, that means the end of your engine, and even the most novice mechanic knows getting a new engine isn't cheap. If you have to traverse a deep puddle, do it as slowly as possible.

## Drowsy Driving

Symptoms of sleepiness behind the wheel include not being able to keep your eyes open or focused, having trouble keeping your head up, daydreaming, having wandering thoughts, drifting among lanes or tailgating, yawning frequently, rubbing your eyes repeatedly, missing street signs or exits and feeling irritable or restless.

If you feel drowsy, find a safe place to park and take a break or a power nap. A quick bit of exercise and some caffeine can be helpful as well, according to the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety.

## Sun Glare

Longer days mean more sun, and greater chances of driving toward blinding light. Always slow down and use caution when dealing with strong sunlight. Keep a pair of polarized sunglasses in the car to help reduce glare and use your car's sun visors when needed. Regularly cleaning your windshield will also improve your view of the road, as streaks can be especially pronounced under strong sunlight.

Make sure to leave extra room between your vehicle and the one in front of it, especially during sunrise and sunset hours when the sun's rays can make it harder to see the car in front of you. And if you are having trouble looking straight ahead, use the line markings on the street as your guide.

## Medications

Spring can be a tough time for people affected by seasonal allergies. If you turn to over-the-counter allergy meds or use any prescription medications, talk to your doctor or pharmacist about potential side effects before getting behind the wheel.

## Sharing the Road

Warm weather means more traffic from pedestrians, bicycles and motorcycles. As you would any time of year, always share the road safely. Stay hyperaware of your surroundings and avoid distractions.

## Car Care

Winter can take a toll on vehicles, from reducing battery life to undercarriage corrosion caused by salt, sand and other road-cleaning chemicals. The first warm days of the season are a great time to inspect your vehicle, check its vitals and give it a good clean.

"While the application of de-icing salts and solutions is critical to keeping our nation's roadways safe every winter, it's important that drivers pay attention to warning signs that their vehicle may be suffering from rust-related damage," Paul said. "This can be much more than a cosmetic issue; it can also create serious safety issues for drivers by impacting brake lines, exhaust systems, fuel tanks and electrical connections, as well as the structural integrity of some of these older vehicles on the road."

You can limit damage by washing your vehicle throughout the winter. A spring clean and shine up will also make sure it is sparkling and well-protected.

If you have winter tires, replace them with all-season tires. Inspect the winter tires for any damage you'll want to have repaired before next year.

Read more about how to get your car ready for the warmer months ahead.

# Community Resource Page



## A Solution to Help Young Children Shine



Help Me Grow is a central access point designed to connect families to information and services about child development and community resources.

In partnership with 211 Maine caregivers and providers can contact Help Me Grow for additional support. Help Me Grow will listen, link families to services, and provide follow-up to both caregivers and referral sources.

### How It Works:

#### Eligibility

We are available at no cost to all Maine children, birth to eight, and their families/caregivers. Parents can also call for assistance during pregnancy.

#### Centralized Access Point

We assist caregivers and child health providers in connecting children to the grid of existing community and State resources that can help them thrive, through a "warm hand-off" from families to resources.

#### Resources

We help support a network of connected service providers, that can effectively serve families in Maine who have a variety of needs.

#### Developmental Screening

We promote working with families to recognize developmental milestones and utilize the Ages & Stages Questionnaires® (ASQ) to assess development. If concerns are identified in the screening process, we work with families to connect to early intervention professionals for further assessment.

### Consider Referring A Family When:

- You are unsure what services a family might be eligible for, but know they need support.
- A family needs additional support navigating next steps in accessing resources (CDS, WIC, etc.).
- A screening needs to be completed, or family needs support completing an online ASQ®.



Scan QR Code to the right to learn more



#### Discrimination Notice

Department of Health and Human Services does not discriminate.

# CHOICES MATTER



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