



Maine Bureau of
Highway Safety

THE MAINE LIAISON



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FARS Data Driven Enforcement

Welcome back to summer in Maine! After the last six months of challenging weather, the blue water and green grass are welcome sights! As Jim and I visit Law Enforcement agencies across the State, we know our roadways are becoming increasingly busy. The summer driving season ushers in the 100-deadliest days across our nation's roadways. The Bureau of Highway Safety stands alongside all of our law enforcement partners, not just those who receive grant funding, to help reduce crashes on Maine's roadways.

In an effort to provide increasing awareness about the number of fatal crashes that occur across Maine, your LELs have partnered with the State Highway Safety Office to produce a monthly, one-page document titled "Maine Traffic Fatality Report" that contains total fatal crashes, general causation factors, general ages, and YTD fatal crash numbers from the last several years in the same month. Our shared goal is to provide our law enforcement officers with valuable data that they can refer to while conducting both routine and high-visibility traffic enforcement.

Sharing this information with drivers during roadside interactions can also serve an important educational purpose. When motorists hear that fatal crashes continue to occur on Maine's roadways—and understand the common behaviors that contribute to those deaths—it can make the consequences of speeding, impaired driving, distraction, and seat belt non-use more immediate and real.

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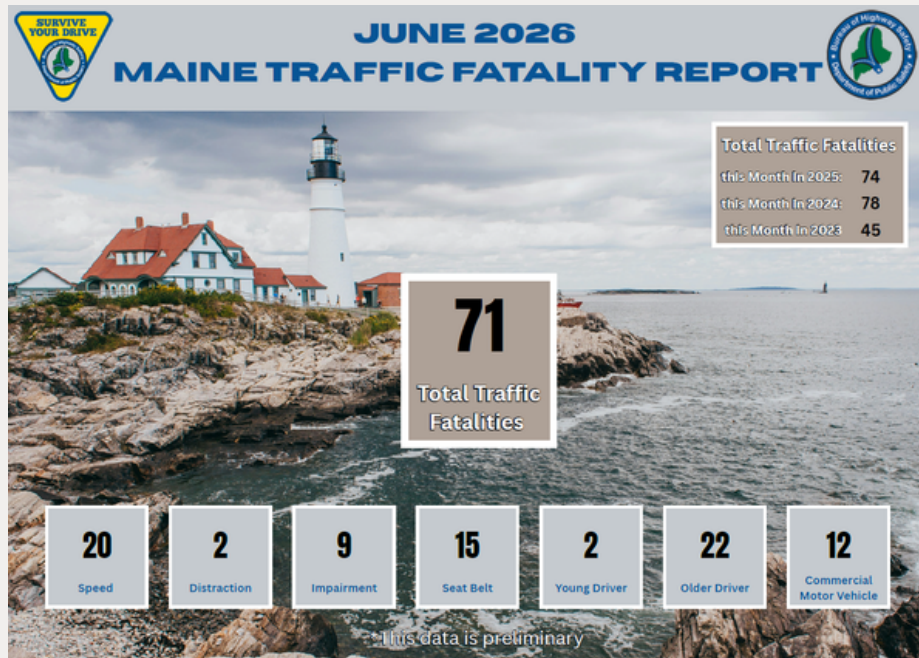


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Q2 2026 Traffic Fatalities

National highway safety research has consistently shown that enforcement paired with education and public outreach can help influence driver behavior, deter risky choices, and strengthen overall roadway safety. Using fatality information as part of professional, respectful roadside conversations can therefore reinforce the reason behind traffic enforcement and help drivers better understand that these efforts are intended to save lives, prevent injuries, and reduce future tragedies.

Our FARS analysts will remind us that the 2026 fatal crash data is preliminary; however, it is important to share these statistics because one traffic fatality is too many. We hope this publication provides valuable support for your traffic safety missions. As always, we are looking to build our relationships with our law enforcement partners and welcome any suggestions on how we can help keep our roadway safe!



The Maine OUI Guide (5th ed.)

September 2025



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

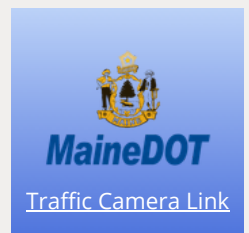
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The 5th edition of the Maine OUI Guide is now available. The "Guide" discusses commonly encountered situations in typical impaired driving scenarios and applies relevant case law, statutory law, law enforcement training material, and empirical data 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 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.



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.



We're here to help!

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BUREAU OF HIGHWAY SAFETY

Coordinators Corner

The Maine Bureau of Highway Safety is partnering with Virginia Polytech with a program they have called "Sharing the Road with Trucks". This project will provide education to the public motorists on how to safely navigate around commercial motor vehicles (CMV), as well as provide a hands-on/in person visual on blind spots, CMV vantage points, etc. The provider will conduct outreach for these and other partners, participate in meetings, engage in event planning, develop and support dissemination of necessary materials and travel to execute each training session, and evaluate the impact.

Sharing the Roads with Trucks will be attending various community events such as festivals, fairs, and other traffic safety events.

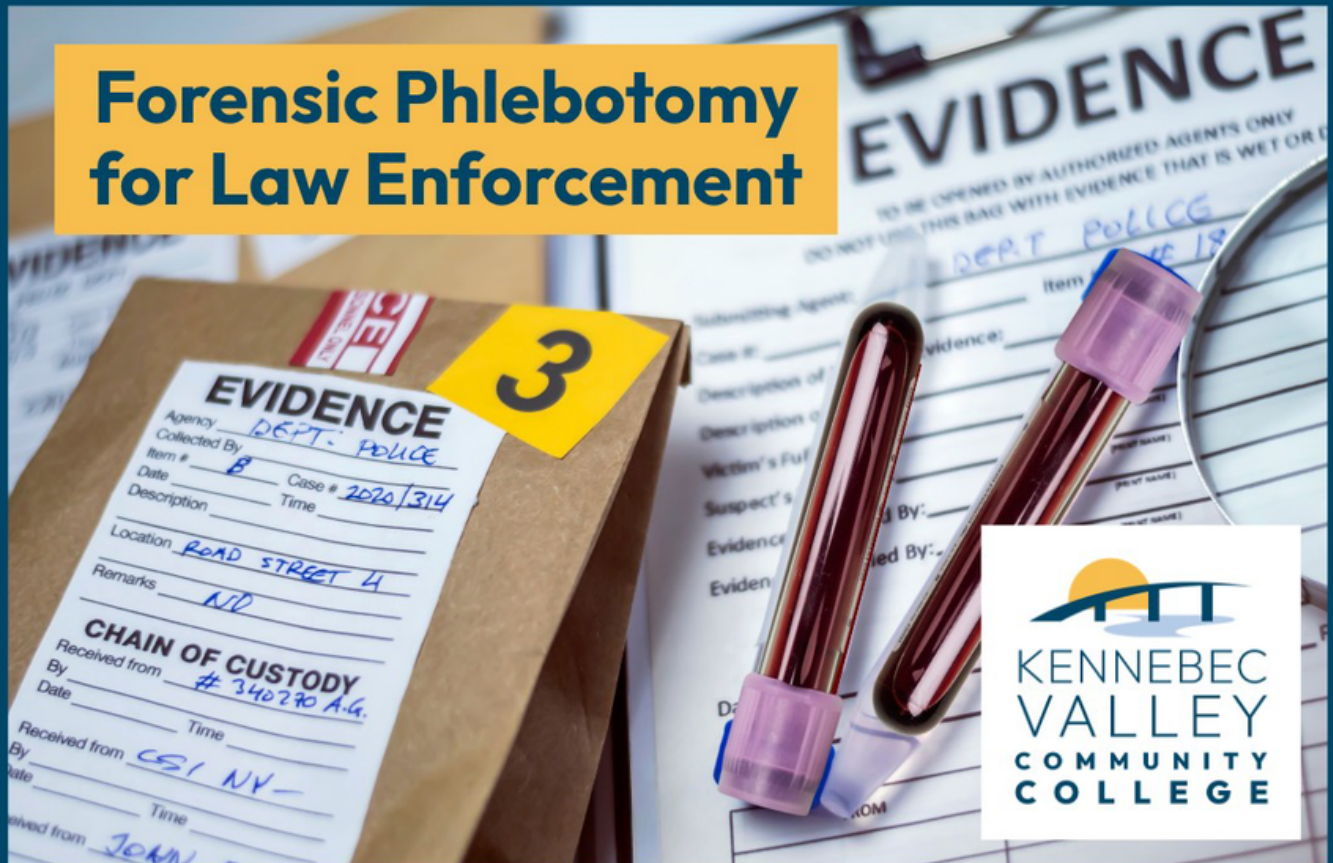
For more information or to schedule the Sharing the Road with Trucks outreach program in partnership with the Maine Bureau of Highway Safety for your community event or high school, please email sharingtheroad@vtti.vt.edu. You can also visit cmvroadsharing.org for more information.



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Personal Contact: The Most Overlooked Phase Within the Impaired Driving Investigation

As part of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) and the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) DWI Detection and Standardized Field Sobriety Testing (SFST) curriculum—widely used by law enforcement agencies and training academies throughout the United States—the impaired-driving investigation is taught as a three-phase process, with each phase centered on a specific investigative question:¹

Phase One – Vehicle in Motion

- Is there reasonable and articulable suspicion (RAS) to stop the vehicle?

Phase Two – Personal Contact

- Is there sufficient evidence to continue the impaired-driving investigation?

Phase Three – Pre-Arrest Screening

- Is there probable cause to arrest?

Of these three phases, the Personal Contact phase is often the least discussed, least emphasized, and likely the most frequently underestimated in terms of the value of the evidence it can produce.

Many officers view the Personal Contact phase as little more than a transition between the traffic stop and standardized field sobriety testing. In reality, it is one of the most productive evidence-gathering phases of the entire investigation and one that otherwise competent investigators easily overlook.

Experienced prosecutors know that nothing convicts a person better than their own words and actions. Jurors can easily understand a suspect who cannot answer simple questions, follow a conversation, recall recent events, divide attention between tasks, or produce basic documents without difficulty. These observations are often more relatable to jurors than testimony about nystagmus or the technical aspects of standardized field sobriety testing. Jurors may not understand the science behind

¹ Nat'l Highway Traffic Safety Admin. & Int'l Ass'n of Chiefs of Police, *DWI Detection and Standardized Field Sobriety Testing Participant Manual* Session 2, DWI Detection Process, at 2-3 to 2-6 (rev. Feb. 2023).



Horizontal Gaze Nystagmus, but they understand a driver who cannot answer simple questions, remember recent events, or perform two simple tasks at the same time.

This is not a criticism of SFSTs. Properly administered SFSTs remain one of the most valuable tools available to impaired-driving investigators, and officers should always maintain proficiency in their administration. The scientific validity of the standardized field sobriety tests has been repeatedly examined and validated through NHTSA-sponsored research.² The problem is not that officers rely on SFSTs; rather, many officers rush to those tests, leaving valuable evidence behind.

Although the NHTSA curriculum recognizes the importance of the Personal Contact phase and identifies it as separate evidence-gathering stage, most SFST training understandably focuses on administering and interpreting the standardized tests themselves. As a result, many officers become highly proficient at conducting SFSTs while receiving comparatively less instruction on how much impairment evidence can be developed before the driver ever exits the vehicle. Despite occupying a relatively small portion of the overall curriculum, the Personal Contact phase can produce some of the most persuasive evidence in an impaired-driving case.³

The Personal Contact phase is where officers begin building the story of impairment. In many cases, the observations made during this phase provide the first direct evidence of the suspect's mental and physical faculties. By the time a suspect exits the vehicle to perform the SFSTs, a skilled investigator should already have developed substantial evidence regarding impairment.

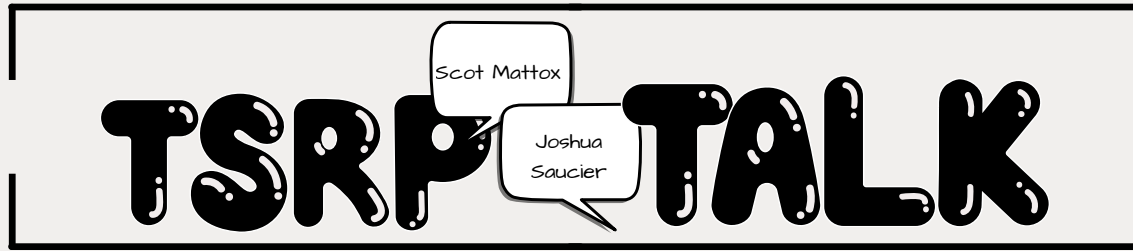
The field sobriety tests do not start the impaired-driving investigation. They continue an investigation that should already be well underway.

What Is Actually Being Evaluated?

The Personal Contact phase is more than simply asking questions and gathering admissions. The goal of roadside questioning is to evaluate the mental and physical faculties required for the safe operation of a motor vehicle.

² Jack Stuster & Marcelline Burns, *Validation of the Standardized Field Sobriety Test Battery at BACs Below 0.10 Percent* (Nat'l Highway Traffic Safety Admin. DOT HS 808 839, 1998); Jack Stuster, *The Horizontal Gaze Nystagmus Test: The Use of Scientific Evidence to Improve Highway Safety* (Nat'l Highway Traffic Safety Admin. DOT HS 808 078, 1995)

³ *SFST Participant Manual*, Session 6, Personal Contact, at 6-8.



Every interaction provides an opportunity to assess the suspect's ability to perceive, process, remember, decide, communicate, and perform physical tasks. The significance of roadside questioning is not found solely in the answers themselves. Each question provides an opportunity to evaluate one or more faculties necessary for safe driving. Officers should understand what they are evaluating and why.

Mental Faculties

Common mental faculties evaluated during the Personal Contact phase include:

- Orientation
- Memory
- Attention
- Divided attention
- Perception
- Judgment
- Decision-making
- Ability to process information

Physical Faculties

Common physical faculties evaluated during the Personal Contact phase include:

- Speech
- Coordination
- Dexterity
- Fine motor skills
- Eye appearance and movements
- Ability to follow instructions

Throughout the encounter, officers should continuously assess these faculties through the suspect's words, actions, appearance, and overall behavior. Every response, delay, mistake, inconsistency, or unusual observation may provide insight into the suspect's ability to operate a motor vehicle safely.

Officers should also remember that the suspect is being evaluated even when no formal questioning is taking place. The manner in which a driver searches for documents, responds to instructions, follows a conversation, or reacts to unexpected questions may reveal as much about impairment as any direct admission of alcohol or drug use.



The various categories of roadside questions discussed later in this article are simply tools for evaluating these faculties. Understanding what is being evaluated allows officers to ask better questions, recognize more evidence, and articulate their observations more clearly in reports and testimony.

Building Reasonable and Articulable Suspicion

By the time the officer approaches the driver's window, a pre-stop event such as a traffic stop, or crash, has already occurred. The officer's task is now to determine whether the facts known to them support continuing the impaired-driving investigation and, if appropriate, progressing to field sobriety testing.

Reasonable and articulable suspicion is a relatively low legal threshold. It does not require proof that a crime has occurred, nor does it require the officer to be correct. Instead, the officer must be able to point to specific facts that, taken together, would cause a reasonable officer to suspect that criminal activity may be occurring.⁴

The keywords are *reasonable* and *articulable*.

- A suspicion is reasonable when it is based on facts and rational inferences rather than a mere hunch.
- A suspicion is articulable when the officer can clearly explain the observations that led to that suspicion.

The officer must suspect impairment, and that suspicion must be supported by objective facts that can later be described in a report or testimony. Depending on the circumstances leading up to the traffic stop, some investigations begin with substantial impairment evidence already present. Others begin with very little.

Examples of pre-stop indicators may include:⁵

- Weaving or drifting.
- Operating significantly above or below the speed limit.
- Inconsistent speed.
- Operating without headlights.
- Nearly striking another vehicle or object.
- Leaving a bar or drinking establishment under circumstances suggesting recent alcohol consumption.

⁴ *Terry v. Ohio*, 392 U.S. 1, 21-22 (1968); *United States v. Cortez*, 449 U.S. 411, 417-18 (1981).

⁵ *SFST Participant Manual*, Session 5, Vehicle in Motion, at 24-54.



- Observations from a citizen informant.
- Information from another officer or jurisdiction.

Importantly, the purpose of the roadside investigation is not merely to gather additional evidence supporting impairment. The officer should remain open to alternative explanations and be willing to abandon the impaired-driving investigation when the facts no longer support it. A good investigation seeks the truth, not a predetermined outcome.

Regardless of how much evidence exists at the moment of the stop, the Personal Contact phase provides the officer with an opportunity to either confirm or dispel the suspicion of impairment. Every observation, answer, action, and interaction helps the officer determine whether the evidence supports continuing the investigation or whether another explanation better accounts for what is being observed.

Understanding the faculties being evaluated allows officers to recognize evidence of impairment as it develops. The next step is learning how to intentionally create opportunities to evaluate those faculties through purposeful questioning.

Establishing the Conversation

Immediately after a traffic stop, officers use a variety of approaches to make initial contact with a driver. Whether using a greeting-identify-reason technique, verbal judo, de-escalation strategies, or another professional approach, the goal is generally the same: establish a cordial conversation and begin evaluating the driver.

This initial discussion should remain professional, conversational, and purposeful. A cooperative and comfortable driver is often more likely to provide spontaneous responses that accurately reflect their current mental and physical condition. Just as importantly, professionalism enhances credibility. Jurors expect officers to remain calm, patient, and professional under difficult circumstances. An officer's professionalism can strengthen the State's case, while unnecessary hostility or discourtesy can become a distraction that is only beneficial to the defense.

The Personal Contact phase is not simply an opportunity to gather admissions. It is an opportunity to observe. Every question asked and every response given provides

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information about the driver's memory, attention, perception, judgment, speech, and ability to process information.⁶

Remember that a suspect's first answers often provide valuable objective evidence of their subjective perceptions and cognitive functioning. At this stage of the encounter, the driver may not know where the investigation is headed. An impaired driver may have had little time to formulate explanations, reconcile inconsistencies, or tailor responses. As a result, jurors often view these early statements as particularly credible. This is especially true when a suspect later changes their story or offers explanations that were not mentioned during the initial roadside encounter.

Although a traffic stop is an investigative detention and the driver is not free to leave, the driver's statements – if voluntary – generally do not constitute an in-custody interrogation for the purposes of *Miranda*.⁷ The driver's responses are often most persuasive when they appear spontaneous, natural, and unprompted. For that reason, officers should remain calm, professional, and conversational throughout the encounter. Aggressive, argumentative, or confrontational questioning can unnecessarily escalate the situation, diminish rapport, and create disputes regarding the reliability or voluntariness of the suspect's statements.

Equally important, the officer is observing much more than the content of the driver's answers. The officer should evaluate how quickly the driver responds, whether the answers make sense, whether the driver remains focused on the conversation, and whether instructions are understood. Officers should also observe whether the driver can successfully divide attention between conversation and other tasks, particularly when searching for a driver's license, registration, or proof of insurance.

When answers appear inconsistent, implausible, incomplete, or contradicted by the officer's observations, they should not simply be accepted at face value. Professional follow-up questions can help clarify inconsistencies, identify innocent explanations, and provide additional opportunities to evaluate the driver's memory, judgment, perception, and ability to process information. In many cases, the inconsistency itself – and the driver's explanation for it – may become valuable evidence.

For example, if an officer asks a driver where they are coming from at 2:00 a.m. and the driver replies, "work," but then states that they work at a library, the officer should attempt to reconcile the apparent inconsistency through professional follow-up questions. A simple response such as, "Is the library open until 2:00 a.m.?" may prompt

⁶ See *SFST Participant Manual*, Session 6, Personal Contact, at 3-6.

⁷ *Berkemer v. McCarty*, 468 U.S. 420, 439-40 (1984).



the driver to clarify that they stopped somewhere else after work, such as a bar or restaurant. The purpose is not to argue with the suspect, but to explore explanations, clarify discrepancies, and develop a more complete understanding of the events leading up to the stop.

The most effective investigators use this phase to create opportunities for observation. By maintaining a professional conversation and encouraging the driver to engage naturally, officers can gather valuable evidence regarding both mental and physical faculties long before the first field sobriety test instruction is ever given.

Six Question Categories Helpful to the Impaired Driving Investigation

Most officers have a collection of questions they routinely ask during impaired-driving investigations. However, because every investigation is unique, it is often more useful to understand what *categories* of questions should be asked than to memorize a rigid script.

The purpose of these questions is not simply to gather information. Each question creates an opportunity to evaluate one or more of the mental and physical faculties discussed earlier in this article. By understanding the purpose behind the question, officers can adapt naturally to the circumstances of the encounter while still obtaining valuable information and observations.

The following six categories of questions are particularly useful during the Personal Contact phase of an impaired-driving investigation.⁸

1. Orientation Questions

Questions that require the suspect to orient themselves to person, place, time, and circumstances can reveal confusion, disorientation, memory deficits, or difficulty processing information.

Examples:

- Where are you coming from tonight?
- Where are you headed?
- What city are we in right now?

⁸ See *SFST Participant Manual*, Session 6, Personal Contact, at 6-13.



- What time is it, approximately?
- Why do you think I stopped you?

The value of these questions lies not only in the answers themselves but also in the suspect's ability to understand the questions, formulate a response, and provide answers consistent with reality.

2. Medical Condition Questions

Questions about current medical issues serve two important purposes. First, they help identify individuals who may require immediate medical attention. Second, they help officers distinguish signs of impairment from signs caused by a medical condition.

These questions are most valuable when asked early in the encounter rather than after the suspect has exited the vehicle and field sobriety testing has begun.

First, answers obtained early in the investigation are often more reliable because the suspect may not yet understand where the investigation is headed. As the encounter progresses and the suspect realizes that impairment is being investigated, explanations offered later may be influenced by the circumstances of the investigation.

Second, early recognition of a medical condition can be critical to officer and public safety. If the suspect is experiencing a diabetic emergency, head injury, stroke, medication reaction, or another medical crisis, early recognition allows officers to obtain appropriate medical assistance without unnecessary delay. Do not wait to ask about medical conditions.

Examples:

- Are you experiencing any medical problems right now?
- Do you have any medical conditions I should know about?
- Are you diabetic?
- Have you suffered a head injury recently?
- Are you feeling dizzy, faint, or unwell?
- Do you need medical assistance?
- Are you under the care of a physician?

3. Substance Consumption Questions

Questions designed to identify recently consumed substances are also vitally important to impaired driving investigations. It is no longer sufficient to ask only whether the



suspect has been "drinking." Modern impaired driving investigations require officers to consider alcohol, cannabis, prescription medications, over-the-counter medications, and other potentially impairing substances.

Many individuals do not consider prescription medications to be intoxicants, and some may not view cannabis use as drug use. Broad, specific questions are therefore more likely to produce useful information.

Additionally, gathering as much information about where, when, and how much of the substance was consumed is also very important. At this point in the investigation, the officer may not know what the impairing substance is. Once the intoxicant is identified, information about onset and duration and the timeframe of consumption may help meet the elements of impairment – especially if a toxicologist is later needed at trial.

Examples:

- Have you consumed any alcohol tonight?
- Have you used cannabis today?
- Have you taken any prescription medications?
- Have you taken any over-the-counter medications?
- Have you used any other drugs or intoxicating substances?
- How much total did you use?
- When did you cease consumption?

4. Subjective Effects Questions

These questions become especially important in investigations involving cannabis, prescription medications, or other drugs where impairment is often demonstrated through the totality of the suspect's statements, behavior, and physical manifestations rather than only a specific alcohol concentration.

Examples:

- How are you feeling right now?
- How is the alcohol affecting you?
- Do you feel the effects of the substance you used?
- Do you feel safe to drive?
- Do you feel any different than normal?
- How does that substance make you feel?
- Does the substance make you feel this way every time you consume it?



Even when suspects minimize the amount consumed, they sometimes acknowledge effects that suggest diminished mental or physical faculties.

5. Multi-Tasking and "Unusual" Questions

Questions requiring little cognitive effort can be asked while the suspect is simultaneously performing another task, such as locating a driver's license, registration, or proof of insurance. NHTSA specifically teaches officers to create divided attention demands during the Personal Contact phase by requesting multiple documents and asking unrelated questions while the driver searches for them.⁹

The purpose is not to confuse the suspect. Rather, it is to observe the suspect's ability to divide attention between a physical task and a mental task. Safe driving itself is a divided-attention activity, requiring motorists to process information, make decisions, and perform physical actions simultaneously.

Most unimpaired drivers can answer simple questions while searching for documents. Impaired drivers, however, may stop searching, forget the question, provide inappropriate answers, lose track of the task, or become noticeably delayed in completing either task.

NHTSA also teaches the use of "unusual" questions during the Personal Contact phase.¹⁰ The value of these questions is not necessarily whether the suspect knows the answer. Rather, it is whether the suspect can accurately hear the question, process the information being requested, and formulate an appropriate response.

A suspect who answers an unasked question, provides a nonsensical response, or appears unable to process a simple request may be demonstrating impaired attention, perception, memory, or information-processing abilities. In this way, unusual questions become another tool for evaluating the mental faculties necessary for the safe operation of a motor vehicle.

Examples include:

- What kind of work do you do?
- How long have you lived in this area?
- Where did you go to high school?
- Do you have any pets?

⁹ See *SFST Participant Manual*, Session 6, Personal Contact, at 12.

¹⁰ *Id.*



- What is your favorite sports team?
- How long have you owned this vehicle?
- Where did you buy this car?
- Is this your daily driver?

The content of the answer is often less important than the suspect's ability to continue searching, listening, processing, and responding simultaneously. The officer is evaluating not only what the suspect says, but also how the suspect manages multiple tasks at the same time.

6. Recent Events and Recall Questions

Questions requiring the suspect to recall recent activities, events, and timelines can reveal memory problems, confusion, and impaired cognitive functioning.

Examples:

- What have you been doing this evening?
- What time did you leave?
- Who were you with?
- When was your last drink?
- What did you have to eat today?

When answers appear implausible, inconsistent, or contradicted by other evidence, officers should ask reasonable follow-up questions designed to clarify the discrepancy. A suspect who cannot account for large gaps in time, provides conflicting timelines, or offers explanations that are inconsistent with the officer's observations may be demonstrating impaired memory, attention, or information-processing abilities. The inconsistency itself—and the suspect's explanation for it—may provide valuable evidence.

These questions require the suspect to retrieve information from memory, organize it, and communicate it coherently. Difficulties in any of those areas may provide evidence of impairment.

Collectively, these six categories of questions create opportunities to evaluate many of the mental and physical faculties necessary for the safe operation of a motor vehicle. The answers themselves are important, but equally important are the manner in which the answers are delivered, the speed of the responses, the consistency of the information



provided, and the suspect's overall ability to process and respond to the demands of the encounter.

Plain Sight, Hearing, and Smell: Continuous Observation

While conducting the roadside interview, officers should continuously gather information through observation. The suspect is being evaluated even when no questions are being asked.

Many officers become focused on what they plan to ask next and miss valuable evidence occurring in real time. The most effective investigators understand that every moment of the Personal Contact phase is an opportunity to assess the suspect's mental and physical faculties.

Anything seen, heard, or smelled from a lawful vantage point may become relevant, admissible evidence. Courts have long recognized that officers may rely on observations made from a lawful vantage point and may draw reasonable inferences from the totality of the circumstances based upon their training and experience.¹¹ While no single observation may establish impairment on its own, a collection of observations often paints a compelling picture that is easily understood by judges and jurors alike. The significance lies in the totality of the circumstances.¹²

Examples include:

- Odor of alcoholic beverages.
- Odor of cannabis.
- Odor of masking agents such as perfume or cologne.
- Slurred speech.
- Slow or delayed responses.
- Inappropriate responses.
- Bloodshot, watery, or glassy eyes.
- Tremors.
- Fumbling movements.
- Difficulty locating requested documents.
- Difficulty understanding instructions.
- Open containers.
- Alcohol containers in plain view.

¹¹ *Texas v. Brown*, 460 U.S. 730, 739–40 (1983); *United States v. Cortez*, 449 U.S. 411, 417–18 (1981).

¹² *United States v. Arvizu*, 534 U.S. 266, 273–75 (2002); *United States v. Cortez*, 449 U.S. 411, 417–18 (1981).



- Drug paraphernalia.
- Statements made by passengers.

Officers should avoid viewing observations in isolation. A driver with bloodshot eyes may simply be tired. A driver who struggles to locate a registration may simply be nervous. The significance lies in the totality of the circumstances.

When the odor of alcohol is combined with glassy eyes, fumbling movements, slow responses, difficulty locating documents, and inconsistent answers, the evidentiary value becomes far greater than any single observation standing alone.

Many of these observations require no special training to understand. Jurors may not remember the precise number of clues observed on a field sobriety test, but they often remember that the driver could not find a license, repeatedly forgot questions, gave confusing answers, and appeared unable to perform simple tasks.

Evidence Before The Driver Exits the Vehicle

By the time a suspect is asked to step out of the vehicle¹³, an observant officer should already have begun developing a clear picture of the suspect's mental and physical condition.

The Personal Contact phase is not simply a prelude to field sobriety testing. It is a structured opportunity to evaluate the very faculties required for the safe operation of a motor vehicle. NHTSA teaches that the Personal Contact phase begins the moment the vehicles come to a stop and continues through every conversation and observation that occurs before the driver exits the vehicle.

Before the suspect ever exits the vehicle, the officer may already know:

- Whether the suspect is oriented to person, place, time, and circumstances.
- Whether the suspect can follow instructions.
- Whether the suspect can divide attention between multiple tasks.
- Whether the suspect can recall recent events.

¹³ This article assumes no officer-safety concerns or other circumstances warranting an earlier exit order. Readers are reminded that officers generally may direct drivers and passengers to exit a lawfully stopped vehicle as a matter of routine under *Pennsylvania v. Mimms*, 434 U.S. 106 (1977), *Maryland v. Wilson*, 519 U.S. 408 (1997), and their progeny. Nothing in this article should be interpreted as suggesting that officer safety should ever be subordinated to evidence gathering.

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Scot Mattox

Joshua Saucier

- Whether the suspect appears affected by alcohol, cannabis, medication, or another substance.
- Whether a medical condition may be contributing to the suspect's presentation.
- Whether the suspect's speech, coordination, memory, judgment, or perception appears impaired.

In many investigations, substantial evidence of impairment exists long before the first standardized field sobriety test is administered. This does not diminish the importance of SFSTs. Rather, it places them in their proper context. SFSTs provide an important and scientifically validated method of evaluating impairment, but they are only one component of a much larger investigation.

The most effective investigators listen carefully, observe continuously, ask purposeful questions, and remain open to both evidence of impairment and innocent explanations for what they observe. Officers must understand that by the time field sobriety testing begins, they are not starting an investigation. They are continuing one.

Conclusion

The Personal Contact phase is one of the most overlooked yet productive portions of an impaired-driving investigation. It is during this phase that officers have their first meaningful opportunity to directly evaluate the suspect's mental and physical faculties, identify medical concerns, develop admissions, assess divided-attention abilities, and gather evidence supporting—or dispelling—suspicions of impairment.

Every question asked, every answer given, every movement observed, and every instruction followed or misunderstood provides information. Individually, those observations may seem insignificant. Collectively, they often become some of the most persuasive pieces of evidence presented in court.

The officer who views the Personal Contact phase merely as a transition to field sobriety testing risks overlooking valuable evidence. The officer who views it as an investigative opportunity will often discover that the strongest evidence in the case was gathered before the suspect ever stepped out of the vehicle.

The field sobriety tests remain an essential component of impaired-driving enforcement. However, they should never be mistaken for the entire investigation. The investigation begins long before the first test instruction is given. Officers who recognize that fact will consistently conduct better investigations, write better reports, present stronger cases in court, and ultimately help keep our highways safer.



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July 29, 2026 0800-1600
Dirigo Safety, Auburn, ME, and Zoom

Designed for both prosecutors and DREs to strengthen impaired driving cases that involve drug impairment in the 7 drug categories.

Price: Free, Sponsored by BHS!

Green Lab: Cannabis Impairment Detection Training

July 30, 2026 0800-1700
Dirigo Safety, Auburn ME

Price: FREE for Maine LEO's - Sponsored by OCP.
\$300 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



Two ARIDE classes were recently conducted in Brunswick and York, with another planned for late July in Indian Township, Washington County. ARIDE is open to full-time officers who've completed the BLETP or have completed the requirements for a BLETP waiver and hold an SFST proficiency certificate from MCJA. To attend, please submit an in-service application to MCJA.

MCJA will begin accepting application packets and scheduling interviews for the 2027 DRE school soon – watch for the announcement.

For more information about Maine DRE's program, contact Don Finnegan Edwin.D.Finnegan@maine.gov.

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.



Heatstroke Prevention

Child Safety

Resources to help educate parents and caregivers about the dangers of hot cars, including children getting trapped in an unlocked vehicle, being forgotten or left.

May 1, 2026 - Sep 30, 2026



Summer Driving Tips

Vehicle Safety

Seasonal changes bring opportunities to share vehicle safety information and remind drivers to drive safely and prepare for seasonal conditions on the road.

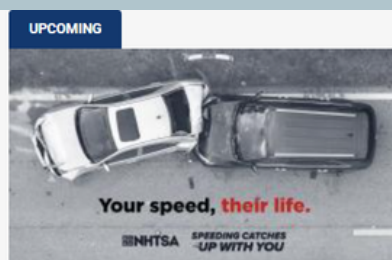
May 25, 2026 - Sep 7, 2026



Vehicle Theft Prevention Month

Vehicle Safety

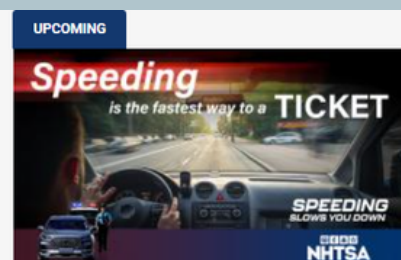
Jul 1, 2026 - Jul 31, 2026



Speeding Catches Up With You

Speeding

Jul 6, 2026 - Jul 31, 2026



Speeding Slows You Down (Certain Areas)

Speeding

Jul 6, 2026 - Jul 31, 2026

CHEMIST CORNER

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

**Maine DPS- Bureau of Highway Safety Supported Breath Alcohol Testing Instrument (Intoxilyzers) Locations
June 2026**

Androscoggin SO	Model 9000	Lisbon PD	Model 9000
Aroostook SO	Model 9000	Livermore Falls PD	Model 8000
Ashland PD	Model 8000	Madawaska PD	Model 9000
Augusta PD	Model 9000	Newport PD	Model 8000
Baileyville PD	Model 9000	Oakland PD	Model 8000
Bangor PD	Model 9000	Ogunquit PD	Model 9000
Bar Harbor PD	Model 9000	Old Orchard Beach PD	Model 9000
Bath PD	Model 9000	Old Town PD	Model 9000
Biddeford PD	Model 9000	Orono PD	Model 9000
Boothbay Harbor PD	Model 9000	Oxford SO - Bethel	Model 8000
Bridgton PD	Model 9000	Oxford SO - So Paris	Model 9000
Brunswick PD	Model 9000	Oxford PD	Model 9000
Bucksport PD	Model 9000	Piscataquis SO	Model 8000
Buxton PD	Model 9000	Portland PD	Model 9000
Calais PD	Model 8000	Presque Isle PD	Model 9000
Camden PD	Model 8000	Rangeley PD	Model 8000
Caribou PD	Model 8000	Rumford PD	Model 9000
Carrabassett Valley PD	Model 8000	Sabattus PD	Model 8000
Cumberland PD	Model 9000	Saco PD	Model 9000
Dexter PD	Model 8000	Sanford PD	Model 9000
Dover-Foxcroft PD	Model 9000	Scarborough PD	Model 9000
East Millinocket PD	Model 9000	Skowhegan PD	Model 9000
Eliot PD	Model 9000	So. Berwick PD	Model 9000
Fairfield PD	Model 9000	So. Portland PD	Model 9000
Fort Fairfield PD	Model 8000	Somerset SO Jackman Sub Station	Model 8000
Fort Kent PD	Model 9000	Somerset SO Jail Madison	Model 9000
Franklin SO	Model 9000	Topsham PD	Model 8000
Freeport PD	Model 9000	Waldo SO	Model 8000
Fryeburg PD	Model 8000	Waldoboro PD	Model 8000
Gardiner PD	Model 9000	Washington SO	Model 9000
Gorham PD	Model 9000	Waterville PD	Model 9000
Gouldsboro PD	Model 8000	Wells PD	Model 9000
Hancock SO	Model 9000	Westbrook PD	Model 9000
Holden PD	Model 9000	Windham PD	Model 9000
Kennebunk PD	Model 9000	Winslow PD	Model 9000
Kittery PD	Model 9000	Winthrop PD	Model 9000
Knox SO	Model 8000	Yarmouth	Model 9000
Lewiston PD	Model 9000	York PD	Model 9000
Lincoln PD	Model 9000	York County SO	Model 9000
Lincoln SO (TBRJ)	Model 8000	Troop E (Bangor)	Model 8000

Highway Safety Partnerships



RIDE TEAMS



The Maine Bureau of Highway Safety and the Maine Chiefs of Police Association have partnered to create a Regional Impaired Driving Enforcement (RIDE) Team Coordinator. The RIDE Team Coordinator is tasked with forming RIDE teams in districts around the state. These RIDE teams provide an opportunity for agencies to collaborate and share resources to make an impact on impaired driving in their communities through high-visibility enforcement.

Details can be checkpoints or saturation patrols, and are scheduled for times and areas of high frequency of impaired driving crashes, or around special events that are likely to result in impaired driving within a community.

The goal of the RIDE program is to reduce incidents of impaired driving-related crashes and fatalities. These high-visibility efforts serve a dual function of removing impaired drivers from the roadways while also having a deterrent effect due to the increased number of officers being seen in each area.

The RIDE teams have got off to a busy start for Spring/Summer 2026. Since Memorial Day weekend, there have been five RIDE details.

Traffic Stops	OUI arrests	OUI-Drug arrests	OUI-Juv (0.00) arrests	OUI warnings
273	12	1	1	16

In addition to the impaired drivers, officers have arrested 3 individuals with warrants, 1 bail violation, and charged minors with alcohol and marijuana violations. There have also been two arrests for drug offenses, resulting in the seizure of Ketamine, 39.7 grams of fentanyl, and 4.6 grams of crack cocaine.

There are currently active teams in Districts 1, 2, and 6, with ten details already scheduled through the summer months. Teams in Districts 3, 4, and 7 are in the process of getting details scheduled.

There is still time to get involved with a RIDE team or get one started in your district. For more information, contact RIDE Team Coordinator John Roma at john.roma@dirigosafety.com.



As the school year comes to a close, a dangerous season begins, the **100 Deadliest Days of Summer**. This period between Memorial Day and Labor Day is statistically the most dangerous time of year for teen drivers.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, nearly 8 people die every day during the summer in crashes involving teen drivers.

If you're a parent, this isn't just a statistic, it's a call to action.

In This Article:

- Why summer is so dangerous for teen drivers
- The biggest risk factors
- What parents can do to protect their teens

Why Are the 100 Deadliest Days So Dangerous?

The spike in crashes isn't random—it's predictable.

1. More Time on the Road

With school out, teens are driving more frequently—for jobs, social activities, and travel.

2. Teens Driving with Teens

The risk increases dramatically with each additional teen passenger. Studies consistently show that **more passengers = higher crash risk.**

The Biggest Threat: The Fatal 3

At the core of most serious crashes are what we call the Fatal 3:

- **Distractions** (especially phones)
- **Speed**
- **Impaired Driving**

These aren't just bad habits, they are the leading causes of deadly crashes involving young drivers.

What Can Parents Do to Protect Their Teen Driver?

You have more influence than you think. Here are six proven ways to reduce risk:

1. Create a Family Driving Agreement

Set clear, written expectations for behavior behind the wheel.

2. Use Driving Monitoring Apps

Technology can help reinforce accountability and safe habits.

3. Limit Passengers

Reduce distractions by restricting how many friends your teen can drive with.

4. Teach the Fatal 3 Early and Often

Make sure your teen understands the real-life consequences of distractions, speed, and impairment.

5. Introduce Them to Your Insurance Agent

Let your teen hear directly how poor decisions can impact insurance rates and finances.

6. Lead by Example

If you text and drive, speed, or take risks, your teen will too.

Your behavior sets the standard.

Key Takeaways

- The **100 Deadliest Days of Summer** is the most dangerous time for teen drivers
- Teen passengers significantly increase crash risk
- The **Fatal 3** (Distractions, Speed, Impairment) are the leading causes of deadly crashes
- Parents play a critical role in shaping safe driving habits

Final Thoughts

Summertime is a fun and exciting time for teens, with the ability to create memories that they will carry for life. The goal is to make sure those memories aren't defined by a preventable tragedy.

THE MAINE LIAISON

"Choices Matter" wrapped up their 2026 fiscal year with 30 school events. We made our way around the state, everywhere from Gorham to Dexter, and Damariscotta to East Millinocket. This past year also brought with it fantastic opportunities through two specific school-related conferences – the Student Council conference, put on at the Gracie Theater at Husson University on May 18th, and the Maine Principals' Association (MPA) conference, put on at the Cross Insurance Center on November 13th.

If you are connected to a middle school or a high school, and would like to chat about the possibility of bringing the Choices Matter program to your area, we would love to connect! And! It's not too early! With the incredible support of the Maine Bureau of Highway Safety, we're already lining up our weeks with schools for this upcoming school year, and we will kick off our events starting in the month of October.

So, why not bring our super educational VR simulator, our conversation-worthy impairment goggles, and one of our incredible impact speakers to "your" school during the 2026-2027 school year?! The safety messaging that we offer to all students involved will be something that they will never forget. We promise.

If you'd like more information or want to chat about the possibility of our attendance, please reach out to Hillari Morgan, Director of Youth Programs, at hillari@allianceims.com."



Help Me Grow Maine



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

