

# MARIJUANA FACTS FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT



## Increased Safety Costs

- Marijuana is the most prevalent illegal drug detected in impaired drivers, fatally injured drivers, and motor vehicle crash victims.<sup>1</sup>
- Marijuana impairs motor coordination and reaction time and is the second most prevalent drug (after alcohol) implicated in automobile accidents.<sup>2</sup>
- In the five years following the establishment of the California Medical Marijuana Program (Jan. 2004), there were 1240 fatalities in fatal car crashes involving marijuana, compared to 631 for the five years prior, for an increase of almost 100%.<sup>3</sup>
- In 2008 there were 8 counties where more than 16% of the drivers in fatal car crashes tested positive for marijuana. Five of the 8 counties had rates over 20%.
- More people are driving on weekend nights under the influence of marijuana (8.3) than alcohol (2.2%).<sup>4</sup>
- In the first six months that marijuana became legal in state of Washington:
  - 745 drivers stopped by police tested positive for the drug's psychoactive ingredient, THC, in their blood
  - Over half of those were over the state's new legal limit of 5 nanograms of THC per milliliter of blood.
  - By contrast, in each of the last two full years, about 1,000 drivers who were pulled over tested positive for THC. The increase comes despite the fact that recreational-use pot stores will not open in Washington State until next year.<sup>5</sup>

## Increase in Crime

Since medical marijuana was approved in California, the Los Angeles Police Dept. reported that areas surrounding cannabis clubs had:

- 200% increase in robberies
- 52% rise in burglaries
- 57% increase in aggravated assaults
- 131% increase in auto burglaries near dispensaries<sup>6</sup>

Legalization would not ease the burden on law enforcement. According to ASAM “Nationally, there are an estimated 2.7 million alcohol-related arrests each year compared to 750,000 annual marijuana possession arrests. If marijuana use increased, as can be expected under legalization, it is likely that there would be an increase in the number of arrests at the state level for marijuana-related incidents such as public use violations, violations in laws regulating age limits, and marijuana-related arrests for driving under the influence (DUI).”<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. *Drug Involvement of Fatally Injured Drivers*. November 2010. U.S. Department of Transportation Report No. DOT HS 811 415. [www.nhtsa.gov](http://www.nhtsa.gov)

<sup>2</sup> National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA). *Drugged Driving: A White Paper*. 2011. [www.stopdruggeddriving.org](http://www.stopdruggeddriving.org)

<sup>3</sup> Alfred Crancer and Alan Crancer. *The Involvement of Marijuana in California Fatal Motor Vehicle Crashes – 1998-2008*. (2011)

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup> Couper, F. *Data from the Washington State Toxicologist Shows Marijuana Prevalence Among Impaired Drivers*. November 2013. [www.stopdruggeddriving.org/news.html](http://www.stopdruggeddriving.org/news.html)

<sup>6</sup> Healthy and Drug Free Colorado. Organized Crime, Violence, and Drug Use Go Hand-in-Hand. <http://www.healthdrugfreecolorado.org/default.aspx/MenuItemID/170/MenuSubID/14/MenuGroup/Home.htm>

<sup>7</sup> American Society of Addiction Medicine. *White Paper on State-Level Proposals to Legalize Marijuana*. December 2012. <http://www.asam.org>