



REASONS SOUGHT FOR REPEAT DRINKING AND DRIVING

Have you ever driven after drinking? Would you do so again -- even after being convicted of driving while intoxicated (DWI)? In this research study, people who were convicted one, two, even three times for DWI, were asked to explain the reasons they continue to drive after drinking.

Recidivism for repeat DWI offenders is a continuing traffic safety problem, both in terms of safety, and in economic costs. About a third of all drivers arrested for DWI are repeat offenders according to data gathered from 12 states (see *TRAFFIC TECH* No. 85, *Repeat DWI Offenders in the United States*, February 1995) and 1 out of 8 intoxicated drivers in fatal crashes have had a prior DWI conviction within the past three years. Since 1982, more people have been arrested in the U.S. for driving under the influence (DUI) or driving while intoxicated (DWI) than any other reported criminal offense.

Mid-America Research Institute conducted a study for the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to determine when, where, why, and how DWI offenders continue to drink and drive even after being convicted one or more times.

DWI offenders were interviewed one-on-one in Arizona, Pennsylvania, and Colorado. All of the interviews were taped and later analyzed to identify reasons for repeat drinking and driving, situations under which the drinking and driving occurred, and situations where drinking occurred, but not driving. Since this group had already been convicted at least once of DWI, they were also asked to describe countermeasures or sanctions that affect their decisions to drive after drinking.

Some trends that surfaced were:

- ◆ A majority of the interviewed DWI offenders fear arrest, and many stopped drinking completely for

some period of time following their arrest. The DWI behavior, however, returned later.

- ◆ Many participants said that jail sentences alone only temporarily solved the drinking and driving problem by removing them from the street.
- ◆ When police presence was more certain (checkpoints, increased holiday enforcement), these offenders reduced their DWI behavior.
- ◆ A majority of individuals with revoked or suspended licenses drove anyway, although most drove carefully to avoid detection.
- ◆ A number of participants believed they were not endangering themselves or others because they believed they were able to drive safely after drinking.
- ◆ A large number of study participants said that the problem was with the pattern of their *drinking*, not the *driving* after drinking behavior.
- ◆ Contact with a concerned individual (judge, probation officer) often led to changed DWI behavior or drinking patterns.
- ◆ Drinking and driving patterns are difficult to change without a person having the desire to change and subsequently taking responsibility for their personal actions.

**THE REPORT CONTAINS THE FOLLOWING
RECOMMENDATIONS.**

- ✓ **Maintain a high level of police enforcement activity.**
- ✓ **Conduct thorough, personalized evaluations paid for by the offender. While offenders can not be forced to acknowledge problems in their lifestyles, they can be encouraged to examine the behaviors that brought them into the legal system.**
- ✓ **Implement intensive supervision probation. Supervising offenders assures compliance with court orders and reporting of non-compliant behaviors.**
- ✓ **Combine confinement with treatment. When confinement is necessary, counseling and treatment are needed to deal with addiction, lifestyle changes, or behavior management.**
- ✓ **Mandate personalized reassessments. Court orders should insure monitoring of all repeat offenders over a relatively long period of time (years) with "check ups" in the form of assessments paid for by the individuals.**

Most of the countermeasures shown in the box to the left are used across the country. A coordinated program that incorporates all of these elements is recommended.

HOW TO ORDER

Limited copies of *Determine Reasons for Repeat Drinking and Driving* are available. WRITE to the Office of Program Development and Evaluation, NHTSA, NTS-30, 400 Seventh Street, S.W., Washington, DC 20590, or send a FAX to (202) 366-7096. Amy Berning was the technical manager for this project.

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