



POLYSUBSTANCE DATA: IMPACTS OF POLYSUBSTANCE USE WHEN DRIVING

Scott Larson, Forensic Science Division, Montana Crime Lab

Captain Doug Samuelson, Traffic Safety Resource Officer Montana
Highway Patrol

THC TRENDS:

INCREASED TESTING AND POSITIVE CASES

<u>Full Year</u>	<u>Total Positive THC (or metabolite) in DUI Cases</u>	<u>Percent Increase</u>
2017	284	
2018	454	59%
2019	464	2%
2020	530	14%
2021	621	17%
2022	726	17%
	Percent increase from 2017-2022	155%

- ❖ The combination of ethanol and THC has the potential for additive impairment: greater together than on their own
- ❖ Canada's per se laws:
 - ❖ **0.080 g/dL ethanol**
 - ❖ **5 ng/mL THC**
 - ❖ **2.5 ng/mL THC + 0.050 g/dL ethanol**

ETHANOL TRENDS:

DRUGS OTHER THAN ETHANOL INCREASED

<u>Full Year</u>	<u>Ethanol Only</u>	<u>Drugs Only</u>	<u>Total DUI Ethanol Cases Submitted*</u>	
2019	67%	19%	3358	
2020	66%	11%	3520	
2021	62%	24%	3784	
2022	63%	23%	3712	
			2019 vs 2022 percent increase	10%

- ❖ The average ethanol level in positive DUID cases for 2022 was 0.181 gm/dL
- ❖ *This number does not include drivers in traffic fatalities submitted through the coroner/ME system

FENTANYL

- Synthetic opioid in narcotic analgesic category
- Seeing the analogue: fluorofentanyl
- Increasing in DUI casework, not just postmortem casework

<u>Full Year</u>	<u>Total Positive Fentanyl DUI Cases</u>
2017	2
2018	1
2019	8
2020	12
2021	57
2022	95

4000+ percent increase from 2017-2022

POLYDRUG CASES

YEAR	ALL DUI CASES WHERE DRUGS IDENTIFIED	NUMBER OF DRUGS IDENTIFIED IN ALL DUI CASES	AVE # DRUGS PER CASE
2017	819	2155	2.63
2018	911	2877	3.16
2019	814	2589	3.18
2020	942	3270	3.47
2021	1219	4273	3.51
2022	1396	3561	2.55
	% change 2022 vs. 2017	102%	19%

❖ Numbers do not include ethanol

POLYSUBSTANCE USE FROM DRE PERSPECTIVE

2021 DRE Evals

- 30% of evaluations involved polysubstance use confirmed by toxicology

2022 DRE Evals

- 38% of evaluations involved polysubstance use confirmed by toxicology

2023 DRE Evals

- 14% of evaluations involved polysubstance use confirmed by toxicology
- 32% of DRE opinions involved polydrug use
- Date from January 1, 2023 – September 21, 2023

POLYSUBSTANCE
FROM DRE
PERSPECTIVE

Becoming more common

Involving more drugs

Can be tricky at times to
identify all drug categories
involved

FENTANYL

- On the rise in Montana
- Illicitly manufactured
- Most pills are cut with another drug
- Simply taking these pills would be considered poly drug use



CANNABIS

- Continues to be a popular mixer with other drugs
- More THC variants continue to be identified
- Some variants are significantly stronger than Delta 9 THC
- Products infused with THC continue to increase as well



DRE EMERGING TRENDS

Polysubstance use on the increase

- Both in Montana and nationwide

THC Variants

- Continue to increase and readily available

Fentanyl

- Pills continue to be cut with other drugs

Over the counter substances

- Continue to be prevalent

Designer Drugs

- Easily ordered off the internet

CONTACT INFORMATION

Beth Smalley

406 – 329 – 1114

Esmailey@mt.gov

Doug Samuelson

406 – 599 – 9263

DSamuelson@mt.gov