

Chief:

Now that possession and use of Marijuana has been legalized for adults in the State of Colorado, do you have any information or suggestions regarding use by youth or driving while under the influence of Marijuana?

Let me preface this article by saying we (APD) fully acknowledge the legal presence of Marijuana in our community and I wish to share some data in hopes of positively addressing the challenges the drug poses, while providing information as to how we can work together to keep our children and roads safe. As a reminder, marijuana use and possession by anyone under the age of 21 remains illegal.

To start, here is some recent data on the impact of Marijuana in Colorado. The original source document is very comprehensive and detailed; I am more than happy to send it electronically to anyone wishing to have a copy.

Challenges:

Colorado Driving Fatalities: From 2006 to 2011, traffic fatalities decreased in Colorado 16 percent, **but fatalities involving drivers testing positive for marijuana increased 114 percent.** In 2006 in Colorado, traffic fatalities involving drivers testing positive for marijuana represented 5 percent of the total number of traffic fatalities. **By 2011, that percent more than doubled to 13 percent.** From 2006 – 2011, drivers testing positive for marijuana involved in fatal vehicle crashes more than doubled in those six years. In 2006, drivers testing positive for marijuana were involved in **28 percent** of fatal vehicle crashes involving drugs. By 2011 that number had **increased to 56 percent.** According to the Columbia University School of Public Health, the risk of an automobile crash is almost 2.7 times higher among marijuana users than non-users. The more marijuana smoked in terms of frequency and potency, the greater likelihood of a crash.

Youth (ages 12 – 17 years) Current Marijuana Use, 2011: National average for Marijuana use by youth was **7.64 percent.** The Colorado average for youth was **10.72 percent.** Colorado was ranked 5th in the nation for current marijuana use among youth. In 2011, nearly **one in four** Boulder County School District high school students (9th - 12th grade) surveyed indicated that they were current marijuana users. This is more than three times the national rate. In academic school years 2008 – 2010, an average of **20.75 percent** of Adams County high school students surveyed indicated they were current marijuana users (at least once in the last 30 days). That number increased to **28.85 percent** during academic years 2010 – 2012 to. In the academic school years 2008 – 2010, an average of **5.65 percent** of Adams County middle school students surveyed indicated they were current marijuana users. That number increased to **8.5 percent** during academic years 2010 – 2012 to. Our anecdotal assessment of

Marijuana use by youth in the San Luis Valley is equal to, if not greater than the rest of our state.

Suggestions:

Here are four very basic suggestions on how we can keep our roads and kids safe:

- As with alcohol, all Marijuana Users should identify designated drivers who have not smoked before traveling our roadways.
- As with alcohol, adults should insure that Marijuana is not accessible to children and those under 21. Store Marijuana and paraphernalia in a safe place.
- As with alcohol, adults should know and understand their limits, know and understand the law, and smoke/ingest responsibly.
- As with alcohol, be cognizant of the signs of overdose and call 911 should medical complications arise.

Where there is challenge, there is also opportunity. As Alamosa community members we have the ability to make good choices and lessen the negative impact that comes as a result of Marijuana Abuse. Stay informed, stay engaged, and let's keep our community safe.

Craig Dodd, Chief of Police