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Roadside drug tests for motorists



Drug testing in America

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Lancashire road police are to be trained to make motorists stand on one leg so they can tell whether they have taken drugs before getting behind the wheel.

There is currently no instant test, such as a breathalyser, that can detect drugs.

Blood tests can work, but must be performed at a police station.

Lancashire Police are so concerned about the emerging trend, known by some as "the new drink driving", they are training all county road officers how to carry out a series of tests.

Field Impairment Testing involves five tests that can be done at the roadside: a pupil dilation examination; standing on one leg; touching your nose; a balance test with the head tilted back, and walking in a straight line.

Collectively they are said to assess whether a driver is affected by drugs by testing information processing, short term memory, judgement, balance, clear vision, muscle control and co-ordination.

Ian Ashton, deputy road policing coordinator for Lancashire Police, said: "Drug consumption can substantially degrade a person's ability to divide attention.

"Under the influence of drugs or alcohol, drivers often ignore the less critical components of driving, and focus their attention on the more critical tasks.

"Any exercise that requires a person to demonstrate two or more of these capabilities simultaneously is,

potentially, a good test.

"Nationally, drug driving is an emerging problem.

"The methods has already led to some convictions."

Police believe performing tests at the scene will reduce the number of drivers taken to the police station for blood tests.

At present officers say there are problems with this measure, particularly as in some cases by the time the doctor has arrived to perform the blood test, the driver may no longer display symptoms of being impaired.

Now the police doctor will still examine the driver but if there is a delay, the doctor can take into account the evidence obtained through the initial FIT carried out by the officer.

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Page 1 of 1



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