Drinking & Driving

The Lafayette Alcohol-Traffic Action Program

LATAP (1978)
What is LATAP?

LATAP (the Lafayette Alcohol-Traffic Action Program) is a carefully planned counterattack aimed primarily at identifying and rehabilitating the "problem" drinker in the Lafayette City-Parish target area.

LATAP, a pilot program designed to determine the effectiveness of a minimum funded program in a typical urban area of Louisiana, is funded by the Louisiana Highway Safety Commission through the Lafayette City Court as Contractor and the University of Southwestern Louisiana as Consultant.

The actual program began analyzing the problem in the Lafayette area in late 1974 and became fully operational in early 1975. LATAP is scheduled to continue its operations for a period of three (3) years on its initial funding.

Why was LATAP begun here in Lafayette?

LATAP's target area is the City and Parish of Lafayette, Louisiana. Studies initiated by LATAP have shown that drunk driving is significant factor in a large number of traffic accidents in Lafayette Parish, both from first time offenders and repeat offenders. LATAP is designed to counteract this fact.

How serious is the problem?

Studies have shown that more than half of all traffic fatalities in the United States are directly related to alcohol. Over 100 million Americans drive; 95 million drink—very often many people do both at the same time.

A recent survey illustrated that of 55,000 traffic deaths occuring in one year, roughly 28,000 were caused by drivers impaired by alcohol. Of these 28,000 victims, two-thirds were killed by "problem" drinkers who drive. A fairly accurate average is that one of every 50 drivers coming down the road towards you is affected by alcohol to some degree. In some cities, this ratio is even closer.

What types of drinking drivers are there?

Basically, there are three types of drinking drivers. They are:
1. Social drinkers
2. Excessive drinkers (Pre-alcoholics)
3. Problem drinkers (Alcoholics)

The social drinker implies drinking in a social context rather than in an individual psychological dependence on drinking. Social drinkers normally never exceed a B.A.C. level of .07%. The excessive drinker
drinks more frequently than the social drinker and he consumes a greater quantity of alcohol on each drinking occasion which causes a great impairment in his reaction time and driving ability. Problem drinkers (Alcoholics) drink due to seemingly overwhelming personal problems and difficulties. They drink at any given hour on any day of the week and, when in the drivers seat of a car, they are potential killers.

How will LATAP work?

The scope of LATAP is broad. It includes some 18 related countermeasures which fall in the area of enforcement, judicial, rehabilitation, and a Public Information and Education Program.

The long term objectives of LATAP are to reduce the number of fatal and injurious traffic accidents in the City and Parish of Lafayette by reducing the number of alcohol related accidents in this target area and to demonstrate the programs effectiveness as a minimum funded alcohol pilot program in our state.

LATAP’s short term goals are designed to (1). Maximize the number of intoxicated drivers who are arrested and removed from the streets thereby protecting the public, (2). increase the likelihood that an OWI (operating while intoxicated) offender will be detected thereby allowing the increased enforcement activities to act as a deterrent to drinking and driving, (3). increase the rate of conviction for OWI arrestees through more efficient preparation and testifying by the arresting officer and the prosecution, (4). reduce the frequency of repeated arrests among OWI offenders through appropriate sentencing and rehabilitation, and (5). increase public knowledge and awareness of the OWI problem while effectively changing attitudes and behavior toward drinking and driving through the use of the media and area schools.

Enforcement

Both the Lafayette City Police Department and the Louisiana State Police Troop I will be provided with inservice training courses under the assistance and direction of LATAP. The courses will be geared toward improving the methods used by regular and selective enforcement officers in relation to arrest functions, methods of detection, apprehension, handling of intoxicated drivers, and reporting and testifying.

Additionally, LATAP will offer assistance in the development of a systems approach in reporting and recording all facts and conditions in alcohol related crashes and non-crash alcohol arrests in Lafayette Parish.

Perhaps one of the most effective LATAP countermeasures will be encouragement of the continued utilization of Videotape when the chemical breath test is refused. Under Louisiana’s Implied Consent Law, a motorist arrested for OWI cannot be forced to take a breath test. If he refused, he automatically loses his
Driver’s License for six months. In these cases, the offender will be lost to LATAP’s education and rehabilitation programs. Through the use of videotape footage, it is expected that most of the test refusers will be found guilty and therefore become subject to LATAP’s rehabilitation efforts.

Judicial

Under a cooperative program with the Lafayette City Court, LATAP will provide two pre-sentence/post sentence probation officers to work with individuals convicted of OWI.

The LATAP probation officers will evaluate the drinking patterns of the offender and will classify the individual as “Social Drinker”, “Excessive Drinker”, or “Problem Drinker” through the use of a background investigation, battery of tests, and indicators. Following classification, the officers will work as conventional probation officers to those judged “Excessive” or “Problem” drinkers.

Rehabilitation

LATAP isn’t just concerned with removing the drunk driver from Lafayette’s streets but with altering his behavior through rehabilitation. A specially designed school entitled LATAS (Lafayette Alcohol Traffic Action “owi” School) will impress the student-offender with the dangerous relationship of drinking and driving while illustrating the progressive effects of excessive drinking habits. All OWI offenders upon arraignment will be required to attend this 10-hour course.

The LATAS course in conjunction with a fine, a suspended sentence and possible license suspension represents the extent of the sentence issued for OWI offenders deemed “Social drinkers.”

For “Excessive” and “Problem” drinkers, the course will serve to prepare the individual’s attitude for the added rehabilitive sentencing that the presiding judge will impose as a result of the presentencing investigation findings.

All OWI offenders judged to be “problem” drinkers will undergo intake sessions at the Lafayette Alcoholism Clinic at which time a treatment plan will be developed by a consulting psychiatrist. In addition to participation in group therapy classes, the offender-patient will be made aware of the availability of antabuse as a means of keeping him sober while he gains insight into his problem.

Public Information & Education

Through the cooperation of the local media and with the assistance of numerous individual organizations and groups, LATAP will attempt to alter the public’s thinking about drinking and driving in Lafayette.

Some of the methods planned to be used during the three year program are:
1. A speakers bureau to bring information directly to the media and groups while seeking their active support of LATAP.

2. A distribution program of various brochures, blood alcohol content (BAC) measuring calculators, Alcolysers-(self tester breath testing device), and numerous newsletters and information pamphlets.

3. A broad program of involvement of your drivers centering around graduation time will be initiated.

4. The establishment of a program of cooperation among High School Safety Councils in Lafayette Parish in order to function as a communications medium between LATAP and other students, teachers, and parents of students. The councils will in essence by a campaign by rather than for the students.

5. An intensive public information and education program will be initiated through LATAP and the local radio and television stations and the city's daily journal. The purpose of LATAP and the effects of drinking and driving on the individual and the community will be illustrated in this manner.

What YOU can do!

First, know your personal "limit". Find out how many drinks you can have before you reach the .05% BAC level. If you exceed this level, let someone else in your party who is below the .05% level drive.

Know your limit!

To reach a .10% level, a 150 lb. person must drink 5 ounces of 80 proof liquor within one hour on an empty stomach. Measure yourself on the following chart:

<table>
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<th>WGT.</th>
<th>DRINKS (TWO HOUR PERIOD) 1/2 OZS. 80 PROOF LIQUOR OR 1 OZS. BEER</th>
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PRUDENT (BAC) TO .05  DRIVING IMPAIRED .05 - .09  DO NOT DRIVE! .10 & UP
Want to know more?

More than 600 persons a week are killed in alcohol-related accidents in the U. S.

A Blood Alcohol Content (BAC) of .10%, roughly one drop of alcohol to every one thousand drops of blood, is the presumptive legal limit of intoxication in Louisiana.

To reach a .10% level, a 150 lb. person must drink 5 ounces of 80 proof liquor within one hour on an empty stomach.

chart:
At a .10% level, one's chances of having an accident are seven times greater than if one is sober. One cannot drive responsibly above a .05% level.

Half of all our traffic deaths are alcohol-related.

Two thirds of our alcohol-related traffic deaths are caused by the problem drinker who drives.

The problem drinker usually registers a BAC of .15% or above. His chances of having an accident at that level are 25 times greater than if he were sober.

The problem drinker usually exhibits one or more of the following characteristics:

BAC of .15% or above
Previous alcohol-related arrests
Previous contacts with social or medical agencies
Medical signs of alcoholism (cirrhosis, etc.)
Psychological dependence on alcohol
History of job, financial, or marital problems or problem drinking in the family.

For more information call

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