

**State of North Carolina
Forensic Tests for Alcohol Branch
Division of Public Health
Department of Health & Human Services**

North Carolina Drug Evaluation & Classification (DEC) Program

Drug Recognition Expert (DRE) Requirements

The Drug Evaluation and Classification (DEC) Program is a transportation safety program focusing on the detection and apprehension of drug-impaired drivers. The program is managed and coordinated by the *International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP)* with support from the *National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) of the U.S. Department of Transportation*.

The DEC Program (also referred to as the Drug Recognition Expert (DRE) Program) was developed in the early 1970s in Los Angeles, California, by the Los Angeles Police Department. Due to the program's success in identifying drug-impaired drivers, it soon became an international program expanding to other states and eventually into Canada and other countries. Currently, there are **40 states** plus the District of Columbia participating in the program in the United States.

The DEC Program trains police officers and other public safety officials as DRE officers through a three-phase training curriculum that includes the following:

- Drug Recognition Expert Pre-School (16 hours)
- Drug Recognition Expert School (56 hours)
- Drug Recognition Expert Field Certification (Approximately 40 hours)

The training relies heavily upon the Standardized Field Sobriety Tests (SFST), which provide the foundation for the DEC Program. Once trained and certified the DRE officer becomes a highly effective officer skilled in the detection and identification of persons impaired or affected by alcohol and/or drugs. DRE officers are trained to conduct a standardized and systematic 12-step evaluation consisting of physical, mental and medical components.

The DEC Program has received national acclaim for its success in identifying the drug-impaired driver. Officers trained as a DRE officer are frequently called upon to differentiate between drug influence and medical and/or mental disorders. The certified DRE officer is an extremely valuable tool in combating the adverse impact of drug and alcohol impaired driving in our communities.

DRE School is extremely demanding. To receive certification as a DRE officer, two phases of training must be completed. The following summarizes each phase:

ACADEMIC TRAINING: This phase is typically conducted over nine days (72 hours). It includes courses in physiology, vital signs, SFST, and extensive material on each of the seven categories of the drugs of abuse. The training includes three written examinations, SFST proficiency examination and five written quizzes. Students must achieve a minimum score on the three examinations, and must demonstrate proficiency in administering SFST in order to progress to the certification phase.

CERTIFICATION PHASE: After successfully completing the academic portion, the students must complete the certification phase. It is the student's responsibility to complete the certification requirements within **six months** following the DRE School. These requirements include: conducting a minimum of 12 drug influence evaluations while under the supervision of a DRE instructor; identifying subjects under the influence of four of the seven drug categories; and attaining a toxicological confirmation. In addition, the student must maintain a Progress Log, Rolling Log and submit a written

resume. Finally, the student must pass a comprehensive final knowledge examination, and obtain the written endorsement of two certified DRE instructors.

The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) is the regulating and certifying body for the DEC Program. Certification is valid for two years. In order to maintain certification, DRE officers must conduct a minimum of **six (6) evaluations** every two years, must have submitted all previous and current drug evaluation reports, submit an updated rolling log, updated resume, and attend 8-hours of re-certification in-service training.

To be considered for DRE training, the following is the recommended criteria:

Exceptions may be made at the discretion of the State Coordinator/Program Manager

- Minimum of two years of law enforcement service.
- Off probation with your present agency.
- Full-time active law enforcement officer with your agency.
- Must have completed NHTSA Standard Field Sobriety Testing
- Must have completed 8 hours NHTSA Drugs That Impair Driving Course
- Must have a current Intoxilyzer 5000 DHHS Permit.
- Must have Alcohol Screening Test Device, DHHS Certificate.
- Must have experience in making DWI arrests.
- Written endorsement and/or recommendation from your local District Attorney's Office.
- Must submit at least two actual DWI arrest reports for review.
- Written letter of commitment from your agency supporting the use of DRE officers in drug impaired driving arrest.

Information submitted will be reviewed to determine application selection.

The DRE Drug Evaluation Process

DRE officers conduct a detailed, diagnostic examination of persons arrested or suspected of drug-impaired driving or similar offenses. Based on the results of the DRE drug evaluation they form an expert opinion as to whether or not the person is:

1. Impaired, and if so, is the person able to operate a vehicle safely? If the DRE concludes that the person is impaired;
2. Is the impairment due to an injury, illness or other medical complication, or is it drug-related? If the DRE concludes that the impairment is due to drug(s);
3. He or she determines which category or combination of categories of drug(s) is the most likely source of the impairment.

DRE officers conduct their evaluations in a controlled environment, typically at a police department, sheriff's department, intake center, troop/district office or other location where impaired drivers are transported after arrest. The drug evaluation is not normally done at roadside and is typically a **post - arrest** procedure.

In some cases, the person evaluated will be a driver the DRE personally arrested. However, in many cases, the DRE officer will be called upon to conduct the evaluation after another officer arrests the driver. The DRE officer is requested to **assist** in the investigation because of their special expertise and skills in identifying drug impairment.

The DRE drug evaluation takes approximately one hour to complete. The DRE officer evaluates and assesses the person's appearance and behavior. He also carefully measures and records vital signs and makes precise observations of the person's automatic responses and reactions. The DRE officer also

administers carefully designed psychophysical tests to evaluate the person's judgment, information processing ability, coordination and various other characteristics. The DRE officer will systematically consider everything about the person that could indicate the influence of a drug(s).

The 12 Steps of the Drug Evaluation Process

The DRE drug evaluation includes twelve major components or steps, which includes:

1. The Breath Alcohol Test

The DRE officer will need to know the result of the suspect's breath alcohol test, if taken. This is important to the DRE officer because he must determine whether or not alcohol accounts for the observed impairment. Normally, if the driver's alcohol concentration (AC) level is above 0.08 AC, a DRE drug evaluation is not conducted.

2. The Interview of the Arresting Officer

If the DRE officer did not make the arrest, he will need to interview the arresting officer prior to the evaluation. This allows the DRE officer to gain an insight on the driving, conduct at roadside, and their performance of the SFST.

3. The Preliminary Examination

During this step the DRE officer will perform a preliminary examination checking for any evidence of a medical complication that would warrant terminating the evaluation and requesting medical assistance. The driver is asked a series of questions, and the DRE officer conducts a series of eye examinations that assists in making the decision whether the driver is impaired from alcohol and/or drugs or if the impairment may be medically related. If drug impairment is suspected, the DRE officer proceeds with the evaluation.

4. Examinations of the Eyes

In this step, the DRE officer administers three tests of the suspect's eyes: (1) Horizontal Gaze Nystagmus (HGN), (2) Vertical Gaze Nystagmus and (3) Lack of Convergence.

5. Divided Attention Psychophysical Tests

The DRE officer conducts a series of psychophysical tests that assists in determining the suspect's condition and if he/she is able to operate a vehicle safely. The DRE officer administers four divided attention psychophysical tests: (1) the Romberg Balance, (2) Walk and Turn, (3) One Leg Stand, and (4) Modified Finger to Nose.

6. Examination of Vital Signs

The sixth step requires the DRE officer to make precise measurements of the suspect's pulse rate, blood pressure and body temperature. The suspect's pulse rate is measured three different times during the evaluation. During this step of the evaluation the DRE officer will use medical instruments, including a stethoscope, sphygmomanometer (blood pressure cuff) and an electronic digital thermometer.

7. Dark Room Examinations

During this step in the evaluation process the DRE will take the suspect into a separate room where the DRE officer can obtain an estimate of the suspect's pupil size in three different lighting conditions. The DRE officer uses a device called a pupilometer and a penlight to conduct the measurements in room light, near total darkness and direct light.

8. Examination for Muscle Tone

During this step, the DRE officer inspects the suspect's arm muscles checking for muscle tone.

9. Examination for Injection Sites

Many drug abusers inject drugs. So immediately after checking muscle tone, the DRE officer then carefully inspects the driver's arms, hands, fingers, and neck for evidence of recent or past hypodermic needle injections.

10. Suspect's Statements and Other Observations

In this step of the evaluation, the DRE officer questions the driver about specific evidence and observations made during the evaluation.

11. Opinions of the Evaluator

In this step the DRE documents his/her conclusions rendering an expert opinion about the condition of the suspect and the category(s) of drugs causing the impairment.

12. The Toxicological Examination

The final step in the evaluation process is to obtain a blood or urine specimen, which is sent to the laboratory for chemical analysis. The lab analyzes the specimen and reports the findings to the DRE officer.

Once the drug evaluation is completed, the DRE officer submits a detailed report documenting the evaluation, the evidence obtained and his/her opinion as to whether or not the suspect was impaired and the category(s) of drugs causing the impairment.

DRE Drug Categories

DRE officers are trained to identify signs and symptoms of impairment in the following seven drug categories.

1. Central Nervous System (CNS) Depressants

CNS Depressants slow down the operations of the brain and the body. Examples of CNS Depressants include alcohol, barbiturates, anti-anxiety tranquilizers (e.g., Valium, Librium, Xanax, Prozac, and Thorazine), GHB (Gamma Hydroxybutyrate), Rohypnol and many other anti-depressants (e.g., as Zoloft, Paxil).

2. Central Nervous System Stimulants

CNS Stimulants accelerate the heart rate and elevate the blood pressure and "speed-up" or over-stimulate the body. Examples of CNS Stimulants include Cocaine, "Crack", Amphetamines and Methamphetamine ("Crank").

3. Hallucinogens

Hallucinogens cause the user to perceive things differently than they actually are. Examples include LSD, Peyote, Psilocybin and MDMA (Ecstasy).

4. Phencyclidine (PCP) and Analogs

PCP and its analogs (a similar substance) produce impairment and other observable effects on the brain and body that resemble the effects produced by depressants, stimulants and hallucinogens. PCP analogs include Ketamine, Ketalar and Ketaject.

5. Narcotic Analgesics

A narcotic analgesic relieves pain, induces euphoria and creates mood changes in the user. Examples of narcotic analgesics include Opium, Codeine, Heroin, Demerol, Darvon, Morphine, Methadone, Vicodin and OxyContin.

6. Inhalants

Inhalants include a wide variety of breathable substances that produce mind-altering results and effects. Examples of inhalants include Toluene, plastic cement, paint, gasoline, paint thinners, hair sprays and various anesthetic gases.

7. Cannabis

Cannabis (substances containing Delta-9 tetrahydrocannabinol) interferes with a person's ability or willingness to divide their attention, which is necessary to operate a vehicle safely. Examples include marijuana, hashish and Marinol (Synthetic THC).

How effective is the Drug Evaluation and Classification Program?

With the inception of the Drug Evaluation and Classification Program and the training of Drug Recognition Experts, many states have experienced a dramatic increase in drug impaired driving arrests and convictions. Two notable examples are Oregon, where drug-impaired driving arrests have increased by 150% since the inception of the program in 1995, and in Washington, where drug-impaired driving arrests have increased 200% since the inception of the program in 1996.

The overall effectiveness of the DEC Program is contingent on the support of the law enforcement administration, the Governor's Highway Safety Office, the laboratories conducting the toxicology, and the prosecutors handling the drugged driving cases. Without these critical components, the program will not be successful.

Contact Information:

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**State of North Carolina
Drug Recognition Expert Program
(DRE)
Forensic Tests for Alcohol Branch
Department of Health & Human Services**

Application

PRINT INFORMATION BELOW

Name **Last** **First** **Full Middle Name** Rank

Agency: Hire date:
Current Assignment: Work Telephone#:
Agency Address:
Fax #: E-mail address:

To assist in the selection of quality personnel for the North Carolina Drug Evaluation & Classification (DEC) Program, please complete the following information: *(You may attach additional sheets if necessary)*

Date of SFST training: 24 hours, or 32 hours of training.
Number of DWI arrests: Number of arrest for Controlled Substance:
DWI trial(s) in the last 2 years: Number of trial(s) in the past 2 years:

Summarize your assignments related to or of interest to, the DRE Program:

Summarize your formal education, work or practical experience, and training that may be related to, or may be of interest to, the DEC Program (EMT training, college, experience, etc.):

How do you expect DRE training to benefit you and your Department?

Is there anything else you think the State DRE Program staff should know about your interest to be a DRE officer?

List a local prosecutor that will recommend you for DRE training:
(Attach Endorsement / Recommendation)

List two DRE officers that would recommend you for DRE training: (If you know of two DRE officers, they will be contacted if listed.)

Applicant's Signature: _____

I have read the attached listed requirements and I recommend this officer for DRE training.

Supervisor Name (Print): _____ Title _____

Supervisor's Signature: _____

Department Head / Commanding Officer Signature: _____

Date: _____

The number of students assigned to each DRE training class will be limited. Applications submitted will be reviewed to determine the selection of applicants for each class. This application must have all appropriate signatures and required recommendations.

Return the completed form to:
Forensic Tests for Alcohol Branch
DRE Training Program
1922 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-1922
Attention: Eddie M. Buffaloe