

# Traffic Safety Facts

## Traffic Tech – Technology Transfer Series

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# Citizen Reporting of DUI – *Extra Eyes* to Identify Impaired Driving

The aftermath of the 2002 sniper shootings in Montgomery County, Maryland, and the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, had an impact on impaired-driving enforcement. Law enforcement was already overextended from long overtime hours and increased security demands following the national tragedy on September 11, 2001. Montgomery County sought to motivate police officers to enforce impaired driving laws.

### Operation Extra Eyes

The Montgomery County Police Department created the multi-agency *Enhanced Impaired Driving Task Force* program to raise awareness, motivate officers, and educate the community. As part of this task force, Montgomery County developed *Operation Extra Eyes*. This program enlisted volunteer citizens, trained and then joined with them to monitor locations for underage drinking, drinking in public, and other alcohol violations. Enhanced saturation patrols incorporated *Extra Eyes* and Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) volunteers giving a more comprehensive focus to impaired driving.

Although citizen-reporting programs focusing on traffic violations are fairly widespread, little objective data exists on effectiveness. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration contracted with Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation (PIRE) to assess the effectiveness of the *Operation Extra Eyes* program in reducing impaired driving activities.

### Volunteer Organizational Structure

Volunteers are trained to detect potentially impaired drivers by applying the same detection cues as police officers. The volunteers serve as “extra eyes” for officers on patrol. All volunteers have strict safety guidelines; for example, they are not allowed to follow or confront a suspect, stop a vehicle, or put themselves in harm’s way. SADD members are recruited from local high schools to help officers on a variety of community services activities including the *Extra Eyes* program.

Generally, *Extra Eyes* volunteers are deployed with sworn personnel during saturation patrols or other impaired driving enforcement activities and in teams of two or more. A supervisor oversees the operation.



**Montgomery County Police**  
*Operation Extra Eyes*

On a typical *Extra Eyes* evening, volunteers meet with officers for a briefing. Volunteers are then equipped with binoculars and police radios and are deployed in their unmarked civilian cars to predetermined locations, typically near drinking establishments. When the volunteers sight a suspected impaired individual, they radio the location, a description of the individual and vehicle, and the cues they have witnessed to an officer, who then observes the suspected offender, and establishes probable cause if appropriate, and makes an arrest.

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## Evaluation Methodology

The researchers interviewed *Extra Eyes* participants to understand the program's history, operation, and perceived value. They also surveyed, as suggested by program managers, Montgomery County patrol officers, including officers who have and have not participated in the program. PIRE collected data on driving under the influence (DUI) arrests, alcohol-related crashes, media coverage, and public awareness information in Montgomery County. The researchers compared this with data collected from two comparison Maryland counties — Prince George's and Anne Arundel counties — neither of which has an *Extra Eyes* program.

## Results

Over four years (2002–2005), there were 25 *Extra Eyes* activities, an average of 6 per year. On every evening but one, where activities took place and arrest data were available, at least one DUI offender was arrested in the county. The number of DUI arrests per evening ranged from 1 to 17.

## Conclusions

This study found that the *Extra Eyes* program is perceived by the program participants as beneficial as it served to motivate and intensify enforcement productivity, the original intent of the program.

Public awareness and survey data, arrest statistics, and alcohol-related crash trends did not indicate reductions in impaired-driving activity or crashes.

This may have occurred because of a number of factors: (1) the program was in partial implementation before its formal kick-off and thus a clear-cut initiation point was absent, (2) the program was relatively small compared to the geographical and population size of Montgomery County, and (3) there was no concerted publicity effort launched to enhance the deterrence potential of the enforcement program. The *Extra Eyes* program appears to have met its goal of motivating officers and enlisting volunteers for the detection of impaired drivers.

To enhance the potential of similar programs, it may be necessary to increase the public's awareness of the additional "eyes" looking for impaired drivers. This type of general deterrence strategy could reduce the number of individuals driving impaired.

## How to Order

For a copy of *Citizen Reporting of DUI – Extra Eyes to Identify Impaired Driving*, write to the Office of Impaired Driving and Occupant Protection, NHTSA, NTI-111, 400 Seventh Street SW., Washington, DC 20590 or send a fax to 202-366-2766. The report may be downloaded from [www.nhtsa.dot.gov](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov). Joey W. Syner served as the task order manager for this project.



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