



“Did You Know” - DRUG DRIVING

1. The Railways and Transport Safety Act 2003, which allowed roadside testing of drivers for the presence of drugs in saliva or sweat was passed in April 2003, yet over 6 years later the Home Office has still not approved a device capable of performing such tests. This is despite hundreds of thousands of similar tests, with currently available equipment, being carried in Europe and Australia.
2. The Railways and Transport Safety Act 2003, allows a police officer to conduct a Preliminary Impairment Test at the roadside and such tests have been Home Office approved since December 2004. However, there are no objective criteria within these tests which define impairment or demonstrate that a driver has passed or failed the test. The result relies on the police officers overall judgement of the drivers performance.
3. In 2008 the German Police roadside tested approximately 150,000 drivers for the presence of drugs in saliva, of these 34,000 were prosecuted for drug driving. In GB roadside screening devices cannot currently be used and drivers are only likely to be tested for drugs at a police station if they appear to be seriously impaired. No accurate figures for such cases are kept by the Home Office, but the Forensic Science Service who conduct the analyses currently test no more 3000 drivers per year . Over 90% of these prove positive for one or more illicit drugs.
4. Cannabis is the most commonly found illicit drug associated with drug driving. However, the active ingredient in cannabis Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) is unique in being mainly fat rather than water soluble. Cannabis is metabolised in the body to a non active form which can be detected for several weeks after use. The active ingredient, which causes impairment, however remains detectable in saliva for a maximum of 5 hours after use.