

For Immediate Release
March 3, 2014

Contact: Shayda Esfahani
P: 778.988.4460
E: shayda@learnaboutsam.org

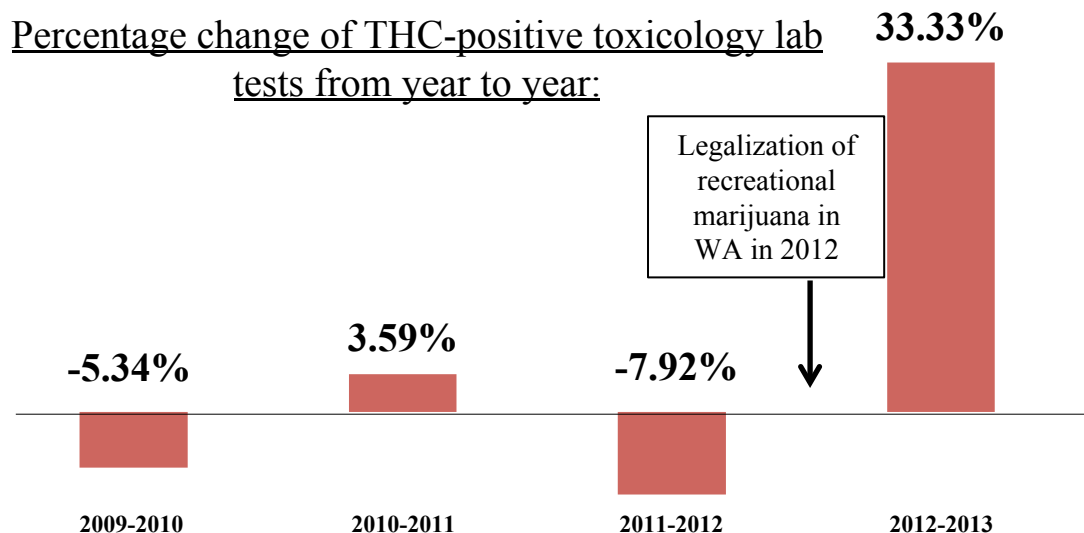
Toxicology Lab Results Show Increase in Share of Marijuana Driving Cases in Washington State Since Drug Was Legalized

A 33% increase in delta-9-THC witnessed in Washington since 2012, which is far greater than percentage increases seen in previous years.

SEATTLE, WA – Data adapted from the Washington State Patrol and Washington State Toxicologist shows that in 2013, the percentage of total driving cases where the driver tested positive for delta-9-THC rose by 33.3%. From 2011-2012, there was a 7.9% decrease, and 2010-2011 witnessed only a 3.6% increase.

Moreover, one should note that Washington State increased its threshold for positive THC from 1 nanogram to over 2 nanograms in 2013, yet the proportion of positive-THC drivers still increased.

“Even before the first marijuana store opens in Washington, normalization and acceptance has set in,” remarked Patrick J. Kennedy, SAM’s Chairman. “This is a wake-up call for officials and the public about the dangerousness of this drug, especially when driving.”



Some caveats for this data need to be taken into account, including the fact that there are fewer officers now than there have been in previous years -- yet still this percentage increase has been found. Also, as in many jurisdictions, in most cases officers do not test for illicit drugs at all if somebody blows above .08 BAC. Therefore these data suffer from a likely under-reporting problem.

Washington State begins the retail sales of marijuana this spring. Already, marijuana magazines, radio ads, and other promotional materials have been created and are widely distributed.

###

About Project SAM

Project SAM is a nonpartisan alliance of lawmakers, scientists and other concerned citizens who want to move beyond simplistic discussions of "incarceration versus legalization" when discussing marijuana use, and instead focus on practical changes in marijuana policy that neither demonizes users nor legalizes the drug. SAM supports a treatment, health-first marijuana policy.