

**International Standards  
of the  
Standardized Field Sobriety Testing Program**



**A Product of**

**The DEC Program Technical Advisory Panel of  
the International Association of Chiefs of Police**

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## **Use of the Masculine Pronoun in this Document**

“He”, “him” and “his” are used throughout this document wherever a singular pronoun is required to refer to either the male or female gender. This is to avoid awkward phrasing such as “he/she” or the inaccurate use of the plural pronoun “they” or “them” when used with a singular verb.

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## Executive Summary

Since the mid-1970s the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), with the cooperation and assistance of the law enforcement community, has conducted research that resulted in the development of a battery of three standardized field sobriety tests (horizontal gaze nystagmus, walk and turn, and the one leg stand) to assist police officers in detecting impaired drivers. The program, which was previously termed Improved Sobriety Testing, was initially developed by the Los Angeles Police Department and was validated in laboratory and field studies conducted by the Southern California Research Institute. Training in how to conduct the tests is included in the NHTSA course DWI Detection and Standardized Field Sobriety Testing.

In 1986, the Advisory Committee on Highway Safety of the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) passed a resolution which recommended that law enforcement agencies adopt and implement the field sobriety testing training program developed by NHTSA. As the program has grown, it was apparent that in order to insure continued success, nationally accepted standards must be established. These standards, which establish criteria for the selection and training of SFST practitioners, would help insure the continued high level of success of the SFST program. In 1992, the IACP Highway Safety Committee recommended the development of this system of nationally accepted standards.

In April of 1992, the IACP and NHTSA sponsored a meeting at the headquarters of IACP in Arlington, Virginia. Persons invited to this meeting included senior SFST instructors from several states, curriculum specialists, and training administrators. The participants met in working groups to reach a consensus concerning the many issues relating to the SFST program and to develop recommended minimum standards to the IACP Technical Advisory Committee on Highway Safety. The standards were drafted and presented to the committee for their review at the midyear meeting in June 1992.

The Advisory Committee on Highway Safety, by resolution, adopted the national standards for the SFST program. The standards were subsequently approved by voting membership of the IACP.

Presented in this document are standards specifying the requirement for selection, training, recertification and decertification of SFST practitioners and instructors.

## Definitions

### **ADVANCED ROADSIDE IMPAIRED DRIVING ENFORCEMENT (ARIDE):**

The Advanced Roadside Impaired Driving Enforcement (ARIDE) program was developed by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) with input from the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) Technical Advisory Panel and the Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police. ARIDE is a 16-hour training program created to address the gap in training between the Standardized Field Sobriety Testing (SFST) and the Drug Evaluation and Classification (DEC) programs.

### **BLOOD OR BREATH ALCOHOL CONCENTRATION (BAC):**

A measurement that indicates the grams of alcohol per 100 milliliters of a person's blood or 210 liters of his breath. For example, a BAC of 0.08% means that there are 80 milligrams of alcohol in 100 milliliters of the person's blood.

### **CERTIFICATION:**

NHTSA/IACP impaired driving curriculum courses (i.e. Standardized Field Sobriety Testing, Advanced Roadside Impaired Driving Enforcement, Drug Recognition Expert) have approved curriculum, but the attendees do not receive certification from the IACP or NHTSA upon completion. Any certification is from the state or agency level.

### **COURSE MANAGER:**

An individual who ensures that each training event follows the standardized curriculum and evaluates the training event. The course manager represents NHTSA and the IACP and resolves issues with the content and/or delivery of the training.

### **CRIMINAL JUSTICE AGENCY:**

For purposes of these standards, a criminal justice agency is any organization, funded by public monies, that is involved in the apprehension, prosecution, and adjudication of public miscreants; or in the incarceration, detention, supervision, or control of said miscreants following apprehension, prosecution, and/or adjudication.

### **DRE INSTRUCTOR:**

A trained, certified and credentialed drug recognition expert (DRE) who has received further training and experience instructing within the DEC Program and who has successfully completed the NHTSA/IACP Drug Recognition Expert (DRE) Instructor Development Course (IDC) or an approved equivalent. A DRE Instructor is qualified to teach SFSTs based upon the qualification as a DRE Instructor.

### **HIGHWAY SAFETY COMMITTEE:**

A standing committee of the IACP that addresses highway safety issues. One of its subcommittees, the Technical Advisory Panel (TAP), makes recommendations specifically on impaired driving programs and issues.

**HORIZONTAL GAZE NYSTAGMUS (HGN):**

An involuntary jerking of the eyes, occurring as the eyes gaze towards the side.

**IMPAIRMENT:**

One of the several terms used to describe the degradation of mental and/or physical abilities necessary for safely operating a vehicle.

**IMPLIED CONSENT:**

Every state has enacted a version of an Implied Consent Law, which serves to encourage persons arrested for DWI to submit to a chemical test to determine blood alcohol content. Many states also allow for the testing of blood, breath, or urine for the presence of drugs and/or alcohol. The concept of implied consent is that the state views the suspect as already having agreed to take the test as a condition of operating a vehicle in the state.

**INSTITUTION:**

An entity receiving funding from federal agencies, IACP, or the State Office of Traffic or Highway Safety, for instruction or research of the NHTSA/IACP Standardized Field Sobriety Testing curriculum; or state P.O.S.T.-recognized training academy.

**INTOXICATION:**

One of the several terms used to describe the degradation of mental and/or motor skills and other faculties due to use of alcohol or other drugs.

**NHTSA:**

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, within the United States Department of Transportation that exercises primary responsibility for coordinating federal efforts to ensure the safe design and operation of motor vehicles.

**STANDARDIZED FIELD SOBRIETY TESTING INSTRUCTOR:**

An individual who has successfully completed the NHTSA/IACP approved Standardized Field Sobriety Testing (SFST) Instructor Development Course (IDC), the Drug Recognition Expert IDC, or an approved equivalent.

**STANDARDIZED FIELD SOBRIETY TESTS (SFSTs):**

A battery of three tests developed and validated through a series of controlled research studies supported by research grants from NHTSA. The three tests include: Horizontal Gaze Nystagmus (HGN); Walk and Turn (W&T); and One Leg Stand (OLS).

**STATE:**

In addition to the designated states within the United States, this term is used to indicate other recognized jurisdictions outside the USA.

**TECHNICAL ADVISORY PANEL (TAP):**

A group formed to assist the Highway Safety Committee of the IACP on specific matters relating to SFST, ARIDE and DRE. These matters include, but are not limited to, the revision of the approved training curriculum, review and approval of proposed alternative training programs, and other matters relating to the technical aspects of each program.

## I. STANDARDS FOR TRAINING IN THE SFST TRAINING PROGRAM

Standards in this section specify the criteria which must be met prior to an individual's completion in the Standardized Field Sobriety Testing (SFST) Program. These criteria outline the knowledge and skills required to be considered for training, as well as the knowledge required for completion of the program.

The current approved curriculum involves a three-day training program. Prior to beginning the training program, candidates should have an interest in traffic law enforcement with an emphasis on DUI/DWI. During this training, candidates are taught to administer and interpret the results of the SFST battery, including horizontal gaze nystagmus (HGN), walk and turn and the one leg stand.

Upon completion of this classroom training, the candidate must pass a comprehensive written examination and successfully complete a proficiency examination witnessed by an SFST instructor.

**1.1 In order to be considered for training in the SFST, a candidate shall be in the employ, including part- time and unpaid positions, and under the direct control of a public criminal justice agency involved in the enforcement of criminal or traffic safety laws as a credentialed law enforcement officer/employee or an institution involved in providing training services to officers of law enforcement agencies.**

*Commentary:* At the discretion of the agency head or administrator, and with consent of the training authority, other persons may audit or observe any or all portions of the SFST training.

**1.2 SFST candidates shall complete an approved classroom training course which shall, at a minimum, achieve the learning objectives as stated in the NHTSA/IACP approved training curriculum.**

*Commentary:* This curriculum normally takes about 24 hours to complete. To be recognized by NHTSA/IACP, regardless of hours, candidates must have met all the listed learning goals and performance objectives included in each of the training sessions.

Because of the differences in the type and level of training for officers in the detection of impairing substances, agencies should determine the most effective means of providing classroom training in SFST. However, in order to maintain the credibility and integrity of the program, agencies that use a training program other than that currently approved by NHTSA/IACP must have the alternative curriculum approved by the IACP Highway Safety Committee (HSC) as meeting the required learning objectives. In addition, the IACP Drug Evaluation and Classification (DEC) Program Technical Advisory Panel (TAP), an advisory arm of the HSC, will be responsible for providing periodic updates and modifications to the NHTSA/IACP-approved training curriculum. Presently, the core SFST training course is 24 hours in length and includes at least two controlled drinking sessions utilizing volunteer drinkers, (i.e. "live alcohol workshops"). Acceptable options to the "live" workshops involving the use of videos have been approved. The acceptable alternatives are (1) to substitute NHTSA/IACP approved videos of "dosed" subjects for the first alcohol workshop, but to conduct the second alcohol workshop "live"; or (2) to substitute NHTSA /IACP approved videos of "dosed" subjects for both alcohol workshops.

*It is critical to note that the purpose of this training is to ensure that candidates become proficient in administering and interpreting standardized field sobriety tests. NHTSA and IACP strongly recommend the use of live alcohol workshops as part of SFST training, however, NHTSA and IACP recognize the limitations some agencies have in conducting live alcohol workshops. If either option is selected, each candidate must maintain a log of each SFST administered.*

**1.3 All SFST candidates shall attend and complete all classroom portions of an approved SFST curriculum. This shall include satisfactorily completing all assignments and required examinations. Candidates shall not be permitted to "test out" of any portions of the training nor shall they be permitted to attend only those sessions they have not previously completed.**

*Commentary:* Class sessions missed should be made up at the earliest possible time.

**1.4 In order to satisfactorily complete the classroom portion of the training, SFST candidates must complete the NHTSA/IACP-approved final examination with a score of not less than eighty percent (80%). Candidates scoring less than 80% on the final may be retested one time under the supervision of an SFST instructor. The retest shall be completed not less than 15 nor more than 30 days following the completion of the classroom training.**

*Commentary:* The examination used to retest the candidate shall be an NHTSA/IACP-approved examination and shall not have been administered to the candidate previously. If the candidate does not achieve a passing score on reexamination, the candidate must retake the classroom portion of the training and pass the final examination.

**1.5 Upon completion of training, the candidate must demonstrate the ability to administer the SFSTs in the approved sequence and appropriately document and interpret the results.**

*Commentary:* One of the primary factors in the success of the SFST program has been the emphasis upon a standardized approach. The training stresses the importance of a systematic, structured administration of the SFSTs. This includes completing all portions of the field sobriety tests in the appropriate sequence.



## **II. STANDARDS FOR TRAINING AS INSTRUCTORS IN THE STANDARDIZED FIELD SOBRIETY TESTING PROGRAM**

SFST instructors will have successfully completed the NHTSA/IACP-approved Standardized Field Sobriety Testing (SFST) training program or its equivalent, and will have experience in administering the SFSTs and in providing testimony in court in the area of DUI/DWI enforcement. Dedicated, qualified instructors are critical to the continued success of the SFST program.

SFST instructors are responsible for observing, evaluating and verifying the performance of SFST candidates throughout the training process. Therefore, only persons experienced in the administration of the SFST battery should become SFST instructors. Also addressed in this section are standards for instructors/trainers in the program. These individuals are responsible for training the SFST instructors.

**2.1 Only persons who have successfully completed the NHTSA/IACP approved DUI Detection and Standardized Field Sobriety Testing training program, or its equivalent, may be designated as SFST instructors.**

**2.2 Any SFST trained person desiring to become an instructor in the SFST program shall make a written application through and be recommended by their agencies as meeting all requirements to become instructors.**

*Commentary:* The agency head or SFST coordinator shall verify that a candidate instructor meets the prerequisites to enter SFST instructor development course training. Prerequisites may also include any state, local or agency requirements specified for instructors within the jurisdiction.

**2.3 The candidate instructor shall satisfactorily complete the NHTSA/IACP-approved SFST Instructor Development Course (IDC), or an approved equivalent, which shall include both knowledge and practical examination of candidate instructors. DRE instructors are recognized as SFST instructors and are approved to instruct the SFST program.**

*Commentary:* This requirement does not preclude state or local jurisdictions from placing additional requirements on persons assigned to teach additional local law enforcement programs.

The IACP Highway Safety Committee shall be responsible for reviewing and evaluating alternative training programs submitted by agencies. Those programs meeting or exceeding the approved learning objectives for instructor training shall be deemed "equivalent".

**2.4 All training sessions conducted as part of the SFST program shall be coordinated by a designated SFST instructor who has previously instructed, to insure proper content and delivery of the approved curriculum.**

*Commentary:* To ensure that all training classes are conducted in accordance with the standards, it is recommended that the instructor coordinating the training have a minimum of one-year experience as a SFST instructor.

- 2.5 An instructor trainer (a person who is training instructors) shall have demonstrated proficiency as an instructor.**
- 2.6 An instructor trainer must be knowledgeable of and have audited the SFST School and the SFST IDC training, and must be thoroughly familiar with the SFST student manual and instructor guide.**

*Commentary:* An instructor must demonstrate evidence of the satisfactory completion of the NHTSA/IACP-approved Instructor Development Course or equivalent. Instructor trainers must be familiar with the approved SFST Training Program and be thoroughly familiar with the curricula for their assigned blocks of instruction.

### **III. STANDARDIZED FIELD SOBRIETY TESTING (SFST) REFRESHER TRAINING**

The standards in this section outline the recommended requirements for refresher/update training of SFST practitioners and SFST instructors.

- 3.1 It is recommended that all law enforcement agencies maintain records concerning the training of law enforcement officers trained in SFSTs.**
- 3.2 It is recommended that states adopt SFST refresher/update training guidelines for SFST practitioners and instructors to ensure they remain proficient and knowledgeable in the administration and interpretation of the SFST's.**

*Commentary:* The methods and frequency of the SFST refresher/update training are left to the individual states. NHTSA and the IACP have developed an SFST Refresher Training curricula that can be taught in either a 4-hour or 8-hour classroom setting.

- 3.3 It is recommended that all SFST practitioners complete a state-approved refresher/update training at a minimum of every three years from the date of their most recent state refresher/update training as an SFST practitioner.**
- 3.4 It is recommended that all SFST instructors complete a minimum of 8 hours of state-approved refresher/update training at a minimum of every two years from the date of their most recent state refresher/update training as an SFST instructor.**

*Commentary:* The methods of training are left to the individual state. However, the training should include curriculum revision updates to ensure consistency and accuracy in the delivery of the SFST training. Instructing an SFST course shall not be considered part of the refresher/update training.

#### **IV. STANDARDS FOR REMOVAL OF A STANDARDIZED FIELD SOBRIETY TESTING (SFST) INSTRUCTOR**

The standards in this section outline the circumstances and procedures for removing an SFST instructor. In order to assure that standards of performance are maintained, a means of removing persons unable to meet those criteria are recommended. The final authority and responsibility for maintaining program professionalism and standards resides with the state. It shall be incumbent upon the state to assure that SFST instructors meet approved standards for delivering the SFSTs in accordance with the IACP International Standards or approved equivalent state standards.

- 4.1 It is recommended that decertification occur when an SFST instructor fails to meet minimum program standards and requirements, or demonstrates unethical or unprofessional behavior that reflects adversely on the program.**
- 4.2 Recognition as an SFST instructor will remain in place as long as that individual meets the requirements of Standards 3.2 and 3.4**

#### **V. APPROVAL OF STANDARDIZED FIELD SOBRIETY TESTING (SFST) TRAINING CURRICULA**

The Highway Safety Committee of the IACP oversees the operation and development of the Standardized Field Sobriety Testing Program. In order to maintain the high standards of the program, the committee has established a subcommittee, the Technical Advisory Panel (TAP). Responsibilities of this panel, appointed by the IACP Highway Safety Committee, include the review of proposed alternative training programs to determine whether or not the course content and learning objectives are consistent with approved standards.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and IACP have developed a course of instruction to train police officers in the techniques of removing impaired drivers from our roadways. These training courses have been adopted by the IACP.

Organizations wishing to submit proposed training curricula for review and approval as equivalent programs for the purpose of training candidates in the detection and removal of the impaired driver shall submit lesson plans, visual aids, and any other required materials to the IACP. The IACP staff will submit the proposed course to the TAP for evaluation. Courses that meet applicable standards and learning objectives shall be termed as equivalent courses.

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