

# Device to simulate marijuana impairment given test run here

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A new driving impairment simulation program was being tested in Fort Frances last Thursday—and this time the focus was on driving while under the influence of recreational marijuana.

Innocorp, known for making products like SIDNE (Simulated Impaired Driving Experience), was at the '52 Canadians Arena to test a new simulation with FFHS First Responders and a few other community members.

The simulation involved a driving course with pairs of cones to pass through using a four-wheeled, pedal-driven cart.

Each set of cones represented a different traffic situation to respond to indicated by a light on one of the cones, which were changed for each run so the drivers could not memorize the course.

Lights could be red (stop), green (go), purple-pink (yield for pedestrian), blue (pass around the cone with the light), orange (pass around the cone without the light), or turned off (just go straight through).

The volunteers were able to drive around the course once to get used to the pedal cart and make sure they understood what each light meant.

Then they put on the "Fatal Vision" goggles used to simulate driving under the influence of marijuana and the lights were changed before they set off again.

These goggles change the drivers' perception slightly and also confuse certain colours with participants. The red lights couldn't be seen, for instance, while the blues and greens looked the same.

This causes the drivers to slow down and better guess themselves, representing the delayed decision-making

someone under the influence of marijuana experiences.

"With the goggles, you are visually missing information," said Tim Jorgensen, who works in product development at Innocorp.

"But it represents mentally missing information under the influence of recreational marijuana, and both lead to slower decision-making and reaction time," he noted.

Following the "impaired" driver was another cart driven by an unimpaired one, which was equipped with a horn to use when the impaired driver made a mistake.

One of the testers, Jacob Empey, noted he already was second-guessing himself at each light, but the driver behind him and the crowd pointing out each mistake slowed down his decision-making even more.

Empey added that what he experienced was difficulty thinking about what he was supposed to do at each light while also worrying about not hitting the cones and dealing with the driver behind him.

This lined up with what Jorgensen had said before the test concerning the difference between divided and undivided attention.

"When you are driving, you actually want divided attention," he explained. "You are seeing your whole environment all at once."

But when under the influence of recreational marijuana, people experience divided attention failure—meaning they can focus on some things but still miss a lot.

"It's not something wrong with your eyes, but it's like a mental blind-spot because you are not able to switch your attention to it," Jorgensen clarified.

"Things are happening but you are not paying attention," he added.

"Your mind is somewhere else."



**Tim Jorgensen, right, instructed Anthony Gill-Roisin and Jacob Empey before they began a trial run of the new marijuana-impaired driving simulation being tested at the '52 Canadians Arena here last Thursday. The simulation involved goggles (worn by Gill-Roisin) that change the wearer's perception of colour and causes them to second-guess themselves when pedaling around a course, representing the slower decision-making and delayed reaction time of a driver under the influence of marijuana.**

—Nicholas Donaldson photo

Innocorp founder and president Mike Aguilar said the "Fatal Vision" goggles are the company's flagship product, which can simulate alcohol or marijuana impairment or even concussions depending on the type.

They created SIDNE, which simulates driving while under the influence of alcohol, with a steering delay to stop people from dangerously trying to drive golf carts with their alcohol goggles, which were meant more for simple activities like walking a line or tossing a ball.

Figuring it only would be a matter of time before people tried using the marijuana goggles for impaired driving education, Innocorp decided to develop its own program for people to run.

"We are trying to show that there are impacts associated with marijuana and driving," Aguilar said, noting some people still believe the effects are

negligible because they are not as severe as alcohol impairment.

The driving activity has been tested a few times at high schools, but has not yet been sent out to Innocorp customers. As such, Thursday's run here was an opportunity for feedback for the company.

"A lot of people rely on us to convey to people, especially young people, the dangers of impaired driving," Aguilar remarked, adding the Wisconsin-based company has around 20,000 customers in more than 85 countries around the world.

"We have a handful we call 'super customers' who are really into sending the message on the dangers of impaired driving, and are willing to give us feedback and information," he explained.

Aguilar said FFHS First Responders co-ordinator John Beaton, a retired local para-

medic, is one of those "super customers."

"He is one of the handful of customers we rely on to improve our products," he noted.

Linda Plumridge, speaking for Safe Communities Rainy River District, said they found SIDNE to be a very effective awareness tool in the past.

"We are quite excited with this next development used to show marijuana impairment, especially with the changes to legislation that are coming," she remarked.

Part of the mandate in the strategic plan of Safe Communities is to prevent any transportation injuries, noted Plumridge, and raising awareness about the dangers of impaired driving can do just that.

"To have us as a testing site is a huge honour and we have John Beaton to thank," she said.