

# Drinking Driver Program Launched

SEATTLE (AP) — A drinking driver can become blind, falling down drunk for all the Washington State Highways Department can afford to care. It just wants to make sure he doesn't go near his car at the time.

A driver in Seattle or King County who pleads guilty or is convicted of driving while intoxicated may be sentenced, after a presentence investigation to determine suitability, to a 30-day stay at the Cedar Hills Alcohol Treatment Center for a special program for drinking drivers.

"The goal of the program is to keep the problem drinker away from his car," said Ronald J. Fagan, director of Cedar Hills. "Objectively, we can't try to stop people from drinking."

The State Department of Highways, under a \$1.9 million Department of Transportation contract, is conducting an Alcohol Safety Action Program. One phase is PDD—Crash (for Problem Drinking Driver—Court Referred Action for Safer Highways.)

"We don't even tell them they should stop drinking," said Ray Whalin, Department of Highways project manager for the alcohol safety program. "We're not moralizing. We're just telling them what happens. Hopefully, they will see they do have a problem and will do something about it."

But trying to get people to stop drinking is exactly what the program is finding it has to do, according to one of the men working closely with the drivers in the program's classes.

Andrew Brennan, a 40-year-old ex-alcoholic, says 90 per cent of the drivers in the program are alcoholics and should forsake booze...

year. It was set up in January and began operation in April. The federal contract calls for the program to operate until December 1972 as a demonstration-action program. The data then will be evaluated by the Oregon Research Institute in Eugene, Ore.

Does PDD-Crash work? It's really too early to tell, Fagan and Whalin say, but both express high optimism.

"Our feeling is that it's going to be a rip-roaring success," Whalin said. "This is the feeling of the graduates, too. You have to talk to them before entering the program and after."

"I really think we're helping a lot of people," Brennan agreed. "I think a lot of people will go back to drinking. But I think when they do, they'll realize we were right and they'll quit."

"One of the most encouraging signs to me," Fagan said, "is the fact that many former participants are coming back to talk with other offenders and are identifying with the program publicly."

Of the 78 who have graduated from the program, three have been picked up for driving with a suspended license. None has been picked up for drunk driving, Brennan said. One broke a provision of his parole and took a drink.

"He called up and said he had taken a drink," Brennan said. "He wanted to come back here. He couldn't, because he has to come through the court, so he went to a halfway house. But it's the changes like this which I see in the classes that convinces me the program will work."

The difference in viewpoints among the three men and the original idea of the program is the result of a lack of communications within the program and the size of the drinking problem, Brennan said.

"We didn't know what we were getting into when we started," Brennan said, "but as we checked into past histories we found family problems, job problems, divorces, drinking driving convictions, all because of alcohol."

"I tell a person that even if he isn't an alcoholic, if it's causing that many problems in his life, he should quit," Brennan added.

Whalin said the program is neither for the social drinker who happens to be arrested the one time he drives while intoxicated nor the true alcoholic.

The key to the program, whatever the classification of the driver, is "intensive education of the individual" to change his attitude and his behavior pattern.

"We educate him first on what alcohol does and what its effects are to let him understand what his problem might be," Whalin said. "Then we get into the things that might have caused him to drink excessively."

During the 30-day stay at Cedar Hills, the "clients" spend eight hours daily viewing films, attending lectures and participating in group sessions where the problems are discussed and possible solutions are exchanged. There also is required reading.

Both of the instructors at the 12-member classes we conduct are driving-while-intoxicated offenders. They each have been clear with the law for more than three years. This helps us with the program because the people who are in it can't pull the wool over their eyes," Whalin said.

Brennan says his past experience led him to the harsher view of the drivers' problems. A person has to be pretty far gone for the ordinary man to judge him an alcoholic but an ex-alcoholic can see subtler signs, he said.

Sparked by those statistics, PDD—Crash began earlier this