New Mexico Drug Recognition Expert Program

New Mexico
Drug Evaluation and Classification Program
Drug Recognition Expert Training

NEWS RELEASE

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New Mexico Welcomes 17 New Drug Recognition Experts Following Intensive Training

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Los Lunas, N.M. – STATEWIDE — November 21, 2026 — New Mexico's efforts to combat drug-impaired driving have gained 17 newly trained Drug Recognition Experts (DREs), expanding specialized investigative resources across 12 law enforcement agencies and four New Mexico State Police districts.

In partnership with the **New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT)**, the **New Mexico Drug Recognition Expert (NMDRE) Program** proudly announces the successful completion of its 2026 DRE School, an intensive training program designed to equip law enforcement officers with the knowledge and skills necessary to identify and evaluate drivers suspected of impairment by drugs other than, or in addition to, alcohol.

This year's graduates represent communities throughout New Mexico, from smaller rural jurisdictions to larger metropolitan agencies. The 2026 DRE School graduates are:

- **Officer Ruben Lucero**, Questa Police Department
- **Manager Micheal Barnes**, New Mexico State Parks
- **Deputy Kiara Portillo**, Sandoval County Sheriff's Office
- **Deputy Victor Munoz**, San Miguel County Sheriff's Office
- **Officer Tyler Bowman**, Gallup Police Department
- **Officer Edward Chavez III**, Santa Fe Police Department
- **Officer Dominic Lopez**, Santa Fe Police Department
- **Deputy Nathaniel Medina**, Sandoval County Sheriff's Office
- **Deputy Erick Cobos**, Doña Ana County Sheriff's Office
- **Deputy Samantha Egan**, Doña Ana County Sheriff's Office
- **Officer Sebastian Newman**, New Mexico State Police – Roswell District
- **Officer Cooper Jim**, New Mexico State Police – Clovis District
- **Officer Adam Jones**, Farmington Police Department
- **Officer Alex Bird**, Alamogordo Police Department
- **Officer Guadalupe Calabaza**, New Mexico State Police – Española District
- **Officer Bryant Bernal**, New Mexico State Police – Santa Fe District
- **Corporal Benjaman Conklin**, Carlsbad Police Department

Drug Recognition Experts are among a relatively small group of law enforcement officers nationwide who receive advanced training in recognizing drug impairment. Candidates for the New Mexico DRE School undergo a competitive selection process conducted by a committee of experienced DREs, DRE instructors, and traffic-safety partners. Selection considers each applicant's professional qualifications, investigative experience, and the need for certified DRE resources throughout the state.



The training is both academically and practically demanding. Candidates must demonstrate proficiency in recognizing the signs and symptoms of drug impairment, conducting standardized evaluations, and applying their findings to impaired-driving investigations. Throughout the program, candidates are assessed against rigorous national standards established for the Drug Evaluation and Classification Program (DECP).

Drug Recognition Experts play a specialized role in impaired-driving investigations following an arrest. Through a systematic, standardized 12-step evaluation, DREs gather additional evidence to help identify the drug category or categories contributing to a driver's impairment. Their training also prepares them to recognize signs and symptoms that may be associated with medical conditions rather than drug influence. These evaluations build upon the arresting officer's roadside observations and investigative findings, providing a more comprehensive picture of the driver's condition.

"*Drug-impaired driving investigations present unique challenges that often extend well beyond the initial traffic stop,"* said Charles Files, State Coordinator for the New Mexico DRE Program. *"While recognizing impairment is a fundamental responsibility of every law enforcement officer, Drug Recognition Experts provide an additional level of investigative expertise following an arrest. Their specialized evaluations help identify the drug categories contributing to impairment, distinguish potential medical conditions from drug influence, and provide valuable evidence to support the initial investigation. These graduates strengthen the ability of agencies across New Mexico to thoroughly investigate drug-impaired driving and hold impaired drivers accountable.*"

The Drug Evaluation and Classification Program operates throughout all 50 states and internationally. New Mexico has participated in the program since 1992, preparing specially trained law enforcement officers to recognize the physiological and behavioral indicators associated with drug impairment.

Becoming a certified DRE requires more than completing classroom instruction. Candidates must satisfy established prerequisites, receive the support of their agency leadership, successfully complete the required training and certification phases, and demonstrate proficiency under the program's national standards.

In addition to coordinating DRE training and certification, the New Mexico DRE Program provides **Advanced Roadside Impaired Driving Enforcement (ARIDE)** training to law enforcement agencies statewide. This two-day course helps officers better recognize impairment associated with drugs and alcohol and is offered at no cost through funding provided by the New Mexico Department of Transportation.

For more information about the New Mexico Drug Recognition Expert Program, DRE training, or upcoming ARIDE courses, visit **integrityshieldnm.com/NMDRE**.

Additional information can be found at our website integrityshieldnm.com/NMDRE. Photos from this course can be found by using the link here: LINK TO 2026 DRE SCHOOL PHOTOS-CLASSROOM

For questions regarding this release, please contact:

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