

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Over 60 Officers Receive DUI Training From National Highway Safety Program

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The National Training Center (N.T.C.) recently held a training session for V.I.P.D. officers with funding made available through the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration. The Standardized Field Sobriety Test (S.F.S.T.), which, among other things trains officers on determining whether a driver is impaired, was held on both the St. Croix and St. Thomas-St. John districts between May 22-25.

According to V.I.P.D. Public Information Officer Glen Dratte, over 60 V.I.P.D. officers participated in the sessions, which also included training on properly conducting sobriety tests and the ability to successfully articulate their investigation.

During the first phase of the test, 12 qualified participants were identified to become future S.F.S.T. instructors, according to Mr. Dratte. This will allow local law enforcement officers to become self-sufficient in the delivery of the curriculum and allow all enforcement personnel to be trained in the criteria, which was described as critical.

The S.F.S.T. program has been available nationally to law enforcement for over 25 years. Since its inception, law enforcement officers and prosecutors have used the standardized and evidence-based process to professionally identify and remove alcohol-impaired drivers from public roads.

The test allowed no deletions, modifications or abbreviations to the curriculum, which organizers say was necessary to maintain the effectiveness of impaired driving enforcement efforts. A wet lab, which is essentially a law enforcement training exercise that sees volunteer officers drinking alcohol while others conduct the field sobriety test -- was also conducted as part of the S.F.S.T. program.

Nationally recognized trainers retired Lt. Tom Woodard, a drug recognition expert coordinator from the state of Maryland, Shannon Trice of National Highway Safety Administration New York, Tom Zilenski, U.S. National Park Service, V.I.P.D. Sergeant Arthur Joseph, and V.I.P.D. Highway Safety Director Akil Johnson assisted in the training, according to the release.

V.I.P.D. Commissioner Delroy Richards expressed his continued support for initiatives aimed at improving officers' abilities, and thanked Governor Kenneth Mapp for providing the adequate resources.