

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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National Safety Council Honors Chris Heartsill with 2026 Borkenstein Award
Forensic toxicologist recognized for profound impact to roadway safety

WASHINGTON, D.C., February XX, 2026 – The [National Safety Council](#) Alcohol, Drugs and Impairment Division (NSC-ADID) has named Chris Heartsill the 2026 Robert F. Borkenstein Award recipient. The award recognizes his three decades advancing forensic toxicology and combating impaired driving.

“Chris’s career is a testament to the power of scientific integrity, collaborative leadership, and tireless advocacy,” said Amy Miles, the 2025 Borkenstein Award recipient and program project manager at the Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene. “His work embodies the legacy of Robert Borkenstein, bridging science, law and public policy to reduce impaired driving and support the work of the forensic toxicology laboratories.”

Heartsill currently serves as a regional toxicology liaison for the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration Region 7, where he assists forensic laboratories throughout the Midwest and Southern United States with analytical method validation, testimony training and obtaining funding.

“Chris has mentored countless individuals throughout his long career in public service,” said Dr. Robert Johnson, chief toxicologist at the Tarrant County Medical Examiner’s Office in Fort Worth, Texas. “Many of those individuals have themselves gone on to run laboratories and continue the tradition of improving traffic safety through laboratory testing, scientific presentations and expert testimony.”

Heartsill is board-certified by the American Board of Forensic Toxicology and has held numerous leadership positions throughout his career. He is the immediate past president of the Society of Forensic Toxicologists (SOFT) and currently serves as vice chair of NSC-ADID. He previously served as president of the Southwestern Association of Toxicologists, was a lead assessor for the ANSI National Accreditation Board and currently serves as a technical assessor. He also served on the National Institute of Standards and Technology’s OSAC Toxicology Subcommittee.

Throughout his career, Heartsill has delivered over 100 presentations and workshops nationwide, educating judges, prosecutors, law enforcement and toxicologists. He has trained staff in laboratories that don’t normally have access to such training due to limited funding.

The award, founded in honor of Robert F. Borkenstein, a pioneering and dedicated highway safety researcher and advocate who invented the Breathalyzer®, recognizes individuals who, through a lifetime of service, have made outstanding contributions to the field of alcohol- and drug-related traffic safety. Recipients are selected by peer professionals in the NSC-ADID.

Heartsill was formally presented the award in New Orleans on February 8, 2025.

About the National Safety Council

The [National Safety Council](#) is America's leading nonprofit safety advocate – and has been for 110 years. As a mission-based organization, we work to eliminate the leading causes of preventable death and injury, focusing our efforts on the workplace and roadways. We create a culture of safety to not only keep people safer at work, but also beyond the workplace so they can live their fullest lives.

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