



The Campaign to Eliminate Drunk Driving: Alcohol Ignition Interlock Fact Sheet

Alcohol ignition interlocks

An alcohol ignition interlock is a breath test device linked to a vehicle's ignition system. When a driver wishes to start his or her vehicle, he or she must first blow into the device. The vehicle will not start unless the driver's alcohol concentration is below a pre-set blood alcohol concentration (BAC). A data recorder logs the driver's BAC for each attempt to start the vehicle. Interlocks may be calibrated to have "rolling retests," which requires a driver to provide breath tests at regular intervals, preventing drivers from asking a sober friend to start the car, drink while driving, or leaving the car idling in a bar parking lot.ⁱ

Use and prevalence of interlocks

Interlocks are used as a condition of probation for drunk driving offenders after their drivers licenses have been reinstated; they can also be directly mandated by judges. Sometimes interlocks can be used when licenses are revoked upon arrest for drunk driving as well, before conviction. As of 2008, 47 states and the District of Columbia allow for interlocks for some drunk driving offenders, a class of drunk driving offenders, or all offenders.ⁱⁱ

- In 14 of these states, the law mandates the use of ignition interlock devices for all DWI offenders convicted of DUI or all DUI offenders with a BAC exceeding .15. These states include: New Mexico, Arizona, Louisiana, Illinois, Nebraska, Washington, Alaska, Colorado, Kansas, New Hampshire, Virginia, West Virginia, Hawaii, and Floridaⁱⁱⁱ Currently, eight states have laws that go beyond mandating use of interlocks for those with a .15 or higher BAC level. These states are NM, AZ, LA, IL, WA, NE, AK, and CO.
- Thirty-three states have passed laws providing for mandatory use of interlock devices by persons with multiple DUI offenses or discretionary use of ignition interlock devices for DWI offenders.
- Three states, including Alabama, South Dakota, and Vermont, have enacted no ignition interlock provisions.^{iv}

Effectiveness of interlocks

Interlock devices are proven to reduce DUI recidivism by as much as sixty-four percent.^v Once the interlock is removed from the offender's vehicle, however, the recidivism is similar for both offender groups.^{vi} The average offender with an interlock installed on his vehicle gives a breath test 5-9 times per day, of which 99 percent feature a BAC under .02.^{vii} This data shows that interlocks are an effective weapon against drunk driving. Since having passed mandatory ignition interlock legislation, states like New Mexico and Arizona have seen significant declines in the alcohol-impaired fatalities occurring on their states' roadways.^{viii}

Alcohol ignition interlocks save lives

Each year, one-third of all drunk driving arrests are of drivers who have previously been convicted of drunk driving. Installing interlocks on all repeat offenders has the potential to save the lives of at least 300 individuals per year.^{ix} Expanding the installation of interlocks into the cars of first time offenders could save at least 1,600 lives.^x By requiring interlocks for all convicted drunk drivers, we could save at least 1,900 lives per year.

The public supports the implementation of alcohol ignition interlocks

Eighty-five percent of the public supports the mandatory installation of alcohol ignition interlocks in the vehicles of repeat DWI offenders and 63 percent also support the mandatory installation of interlocks for first-time offenders.^{xi}

Best use of interlock programs

Alcohol ignition interlock programs have been adopted in other countries.

- Australia has interlock programs in three of its states, adding up to 2,500 total interlock installations as of June 2006.^{xii}
- Almost all of the Canadian provinces have interlock programs for drunk driving offenders, most of which are voluntary.^{xiii}
- The European Union has conducted feasibility studies in Belgium, Germany, Norway and Spain, while voluntary ignition interlock programs for convicted drunk drivers are also being tested in Finland, France, Germany and Great Britain.^{xiv}
- Sweden has the most advanced interlock laws, as drunk driving offenders can choose between having their drivers license revoked or keeping it and participating in the interlock program. For two years, offenders must drive only interlock vehicles and cannot drive outside of Sweden. Drivers are dropped from the program if they are not completely sober during the second year. Two years after they left the program, successful participants had significantly fewer drunk driving arrests and crashes than they did before starting the program.^{xv}

Expanding interlock use for all convicted drunk drivers

The Campaign supports several approaches to implement greater use of interlocks for all convicted drunk driving offenders. First, new state laws need to be introduced to require interlock use by all drunk driving offenders, including first time offenders. Second, judges are one of the keys to increasing interlock use because they have the power to implement interlock laws and to penalize drivers who fail to comply with interlock program requirements. The Campaign aims to provide active education among state driver's license officials, judges, and prosecutors on interlocks.^{xvi}

ⁱ MADD, *International Technology Symposium: A Nation without Drunk Driving Summary Report*. September, 2006: pg 4.

ⁱⁱ MADD (2008), *State-by-State Alcohol-Related Laws*. www.madd.org/laws/

ⁱⁱⁱ MADD (2008), *Ignition Interlock Brief*.

^{iv} Ibid.

^v Voas, Robert, et al. "The Alberta Interlock Program: The Evaluation of a Province-Wide Program on DUI Recidivism." *Addiction* 94 (12): 1849-1859. 1999.

^{vi} Marques, Paul.

^{vii} Ibid.

^{viii} See NHTSA FARS data for 2005, 2006, and 2007. Between 2006 and 2007, Arizona experienced a 15.7 percent decrease in alcohol-impaired driving fatalities, and New Mexico has experienced a 2.2 percent decrease in alcohol-impaired driving fatalities. From 2003, the first year in which New Mexico passed an interlock law to 2007, New Mexico has experienced over 20 percent reduction in alcohol-impaired fatalities.

^{ix} Fell, James. "Potential Role of Technology in Reducing Alcohol-Related Traffic Fatalities." Presentation at the *MADD International Technology Symposium*: June 19-20, 2006.

^x Fell, James. "Potential Role of Technology in Reducing Alcohol-Related Traffic Fatalities." Presentation at the *MADD International Technology Symposium*: June 19-20, 2006.

^{xi} McInturff, Bill. "A Presentation of key findings from a national survey of 800 drivers conducted June 8-11, 2006." Presentation at the *MADD International Technology Symposium*: June 19-20, 2006.

^{xii} MADD, *International Technology Symposium: A Nation Without Drunk Driving Summary Report*, September, 2006: pg 5.

^{xiii} Ibid.

^{xiv} Ibid.

^{xv} Ibid.

^{xvi} MADD, *International Technology Symposium: A Nation Without Drunk Driving Summary Report*, September, 2006: pg 6.