

Sober Blow



Or You Don't GO!

Ignition Interlock *Informer*

July 1, 2007
Volume 1 Issue 1

Promoting positive legislative answers to drunk driving recidivism in Alaska

What Is This?

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 What Is This?
- 1 What is An Ignition Interlock Anyway?
- 2 Brought to You By . . .
- 3 A Matter of Public Safety
- 4 Personal Profile

INSERT: Between the Lines

This newsletter has one purpose: to provide a succinct format for presenting information about ignition interlocks to Alaskans.

Why should you read it? HB19, HB154 and SB92, introduced during the last legislative session, all related to expanding the use of ignition interlock devices (IID) to combat drunk driving recidivism. It was clear from the questions asked within committees that there are still many questions about and much misinformation regarding the efficacy of ignition interlock technology. This is no surprise given the number of issues that come before the House and Senate annually.

It is my intent, as editor, to bring some clarity and truth to the table. I am an ardent supporter of a greatly expanded IID program and this newsletter will reflect why!

My goal is to synthesize the current ignition interlock research, and bring

Please see *What Is This* on page 2

What is An Ignition Interlock Anyway?

Included in this newsletter is a reprint of a great publication that answers this question. I apologize for the small font, but believe me, it's worth the effort to read through it!

Simply put, an ignition interlock device is a piece of technology that separates the act of drinking from the act of driving.

As you can see from the picture to the left, IIDs are about the size of an (old-fashioned) cell phone. It is hard-wired into the vehicle and keeps track of data that is downloaded at regular intervals by the IID vendor. It tracks all attempts to start the vehicle. It allows a start if the breath alcohol registers below a pre-programmed level.

Ignition interlocks are successful whenever they stop an alcohol-impaired individual from getting on the road!

Every failed attempt has the potential to save lives!



Brought To You By . . .

. . . me -- an Anchorage Mom with a mission.

I represent no interests other than my own - I have five children, four of whom live at home and three of whom are driving. Their safety is a primary motivator for me.

I am employed by no one with an interest in this issue. But I do volunteer regularly at the Downtown Soup Kitchen in Anchorage where I have met a number of people whose lives are dramatically affected by their inability to fully participate in society by being free to drive - *SAFELY*. I add the caveat "safely" because I want no one to be confused about my intentions.

I have no interest in supporting the idea or practice of allowing high-risk drivers, as demonstrated by a DUI conviction, to get back on the road carte blanche. I have every interest in seeing legislation enacted that recognizes the reality of the road -- 50-75% of individuals with revoked licenses *drive anyway!*

As long as these drivers are on the road, I want to see every effort made to require ALL DUI offenders (yes, even first-time offenders) to drive an ignition interlock equipped vehicle. This means misdemeanors AND felons, past and present.

A Matter of Public Safety on page 3 outlines an ignition interlock program that incorporates the features that research has identified as most effective in reducing drunk driving recidivism rates.

~ *Narda Butler*

What is This? from page 1

it to you in a readable format. If you are a legislator, please file this information in your files to bring forward when HB19 comes before you next session. If you are a constituent, please send this along to your legislator.

Alaska can have the most comprehensive ignition interlock program in the country if careful attention is paid, at *this* point. This newsletter will look at a number of topics relating to the issue including judicial vs. administrative programs, best practices identified by current research, public health and public cost implications and will include a personal profile of either an offender or victim.

Links to relevant websites and reprints of other's work will point the reader to venues for further research.

*"50-75% of individuals
with revoked licenses
drive anyway!"*

IN THE PRESS

. . . "The initial (MADD) goal, which is backed by associations of state highway officials and car manufacturers, is to have all states do what New Mexico has already done: require that all convicted drunken drivers, even first-time offenders, have devices installed in their cars that measure alcohol in the breath and immobilized the car if levels exceed set limits."

New York Times Editorial
November 25, 2006

A Matter of Public Safety

50 - 75% of all drivers with revoked licenses, drive anyway.(1) This is a national statistic that has been proven time and again. The reality of the road is this: You can take away a person's license to drive but you cannot prevent them from driving.

According to the National Highway and Traffic Safety Administration, "Repeat offenders are a continuing traffic safety problem. The increasing problem of jail overcrowding has created the need to develop alternative punishment programs. The "lock-em up and throw the key away" approach no longer works." (2)

The use of IIDs has been shown to reduce recidivism rates by as much as 65%! The most successful programs include a mandatory treatment component. Below are listed the key features of an excellent ignition interlock program based upon best practices defined by published research.

- It is imperative to require ALL DUI offenders drive an ignition interlock equipped vehicle. This means misdemeanors AND felons, past and present.
- The requirement to use an IID should be made *as soon as possible* after conviction. Lengthy revocations only give offenders time to learn to drive illegally. The IID requirement should be permitted *during* the period of revocation
- Their should be performance-based exit from the program - in other words, the offender must demonstrate that he/she has successfully started his/her car with no failed attempts for x number of months (at least six months; one year is better) before they can be released from the program.
- Teens who are convicted of drunk driving should be required to use an IID until they are twenty-one or for one full year of successful start attempts, whichever is longer.
- The requirement for one clean year of driving should not be able to be "waited out". In other words, if an offender chooses not to drive during his/her period of license revocation, the requirement for a documented year of clean driving using an IID stands as a pre-requisite to full license reinstatement.
- An indigent fund should be established to fund participation in the program for those with little means. Many states have already implemented models of these.
- The program is, of course, funded by the offenders.

An ignition interlock program of this type will go far in reducing drunk driving recidivism rates in Alaska, improve the safety of our public roadways and open doors for individuals to more fully participate productively in society.

(1) Voas, R.B.; Tippetts, A.S. and Taylor, E. 2000. Effectiveness of the Ohio vehicle action and administrative license suspension laws. Washington, DC: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

(2) <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/outreach/SafeSobr/17qp/standopt.html>

"The use of IIDs has been shown to reduce recidivism rates by as much as 65%!"

FUTURE TOPICS

- **Administrative vs. Judicial:** How Can An IID Program Capture ALL offenders
- **Alaska Statistics:** Can we *Really* Improve Highway Safety?
- **New Mexico's Model Program**
- **HB19:** How Does it Measure Up?
- ... and more!

Personal Profile: *Rodney Hebert*

Rodney Hebert is a 44 year-old Native man with a past history of alcoholism. As of five years ago, he was a man with a checkered criminal history all relating to alcohol dependence, a chaotic work history, and a host of relationships built around alcohol.

But five years ago, he decided to change. He chose to take the steps necessary to attain sobriety. With the help of new friends, the old being left behind, and with the help of God, he has cleaned up his legal and financial affairs, started a business and currently is employed fulltime as the Maintenance Foreman at ChangePoint church. He even bought a house! Rodney has turned a life of societal consumption into a life of productivity.

The only thing he cannot change, is his ability to legally drive. He has a lifetime driver's license revocation in spite of having never been involved in an accident or harming property. He is eligible to apply for a termination of revocation in 2012 but has been told not to have high hopes.

Life for him is still very difficult. There are times when he wonders how long he can continue to live in the virtual prison that a license revocation imposes. He cannot run to Lowe's to get the parts to repair his ice maker without incurring a taxi cost of \$35. The part costs \$.95. Daily tasks such as grocery shopping or going to the drycleaners to clean a suit for a wedding or even getting to the wedding are time-consuming and expensive. He asks his friends, "Just try to imagine doing without your car for even one day. How would it change how you live? "

It is for Rodney, and people like him that a good ignition interlock program is needed. At this point, he is sober and a contributing member of society. With an ignition interlock installed on his car, he can drive legally and be freed from the virtual prison that a license revocation imposes. And, most importantly, he can assure the public that when he gets behind the wheel of a vehicle he will be driving sober

Ignition Interlock *Informer*

c/o Narda Butler
10075 Grover Dr.
Anchorage, AK 99507