

# IGNITION INTERLOCKS

## WHAT IS AN ALCOHOL IGNITION INTERLOCK?

- An alcohol ignition interlock is a small, sophisticated device – about the size of a cell phone – which is installed into the starting circuit of a vehicle.
- A driver must blow into the device and the vehicle will not start if the driver has measurable alcohol (set to a predetermined level) in their system.
- If driver does not have alcohol above the measurable level in their system, the vehicle starts.
- Interlocks will be set for “running retests,” which require a driver to provide breath tests at regular intervals, preventing drivers from asking a sober friend to start the car.
- If a driver fails a running retest, – the vehicle will not stop. The interlock does not have the ability to stop the vehicle once it is running for safety reasons.



## THE FACTS:

- Alcohol ignition interlocks are proven to be an effective tool in the battle against drunk driving.
- Studies have shown the devices are up to 90 percent effective in keeping convicted drunk drivers from recommitting the crime, as long as the interlock is installed on the vehicle.[1]
- Research shows with 1<sup>st</sup> conviction of drunk have driven drunk more than 87 times before their first arrest.[2]
- Three out of Four suspended drivers continue to drive. An interlock is more effective than license suspension alone, as 50 to 75 percent of convicted drunk drivers continue to drive on a suspended license.
- All-offender interlock laws are widespread. Twenty-eight states, plus a California pilot program, have laws requiring ignition interlocks for all first-time convicted drunk drivers.
- As of August 2015, there are approximately 329,000 interlocks in use in the United States.

## IGNITION INTERLOCK LAWS SAVES LIVES

Due in part to interlock laws for all convicted drunk drivers, states reported significant reductions in drunk driving deaths:

- |                          |                             |                        |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| • Arizona: 43 percent    | • Louisiana: 35 percent     | • Alaska: 28 percent   |
| • Oregon: 42 percent     | • West Virginia: 33 percent | • Kansas: 26 percent   |
| • New Mexico: 38 percent | • Utah: 30 percent          | • Colorado: 24 percent |



Driver blows into interlock device



If breath alcohol is **below** allowed limit, vehicle can be start



If breath alcohol is **above** allowed limit, engine will not start

## PUBLIC SUPPORTS INTERLOCKS FOR ALL CONVICTED DRUNK DRIVERS

These surveys show strong public support ignition interlocks for all convicted drunk drivers:

- 88 percent (Center for Excellence in Rural Safety, 2010)
- 84 percent (Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, 2009)
- 76 percent (American Automobile Association, 2012)

Additionally, these leading traffic safety organizations, Advocates for Auto and Highway Safety, American Automobile Association (AAA), Auto Alliance, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Governors Highways Safety Association (GHSA), Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS), International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), National Safety Council (NSC), and National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) and the Foundation for Advancing Alcohol Responsibility (FAAR) support ignition interlocks for all convicted drunk drivers, with a BAC of .08 or greater.

Information courtesy [www.MADD.org](http://www.MADD.org)

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

[2] Zador, Paul, Sheila Krawchuk, and B. Moore. (1997) "Drinking and Driving Trips, Stops by Police, and Arrests: Analysis of the 1995 National Survey of Drinking and Driving Attitudes and Behavior," Rockville, MD: Estat, Inc, 1997.

# TEXAS IGNITION INTERLOCK FAQs

## How reliable are ignition interlocks?

Alcohol ignition interlocks are required to meet state and federal standards set by the Texas Department of Public Safety (TDPS) and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).

## Who pays for the device?

Offenders pay for the interlocks, as they are the ones benefiting from it (the ability to drive legally).

## How much do the devices cost? What if the offender can't afford it?

On average, interlocks are Free - \$100 to install and offenders lease the equipment and pay a monthly service fee ranging from \$60-100 per month, depending on the provider. This is less than three dollars a day. In Texas, the Judge has the discretion to reduce the cost of interlock and if the offender is indigent contacts the providers to ask for financial assistance.

## Are there ways to bypass the device, like someone else blowing into it?

This is possible, and there should be strict penalties for blowing into someone else's ignition interlock or for having someone else blow into the device. Interlocks are required to have anti-circumvention features that prevent such activity. One of these features is the running retest, which requires offenders to blow into the device at random intervals once the vehicle has been allowed to start. Furthermore, blowing into an interlock is a learned skill that requires specific training that would most likely be difficult for an impaired person to administer. There are also tamper-proof seals on interlocks. An additional feature is to require a camera. The camera is not mandatory but provides positive proof who took the test. 80% of interlocks in Texas have cameras, at the court, attorney or client request.

## What if someone else drives the vehicle with the interlock and fails a retest?

This is possible. However, when someone commits a crime, he/she is responsible for the consequences of his/her actions. If an interlock is one of these consequences, then the offender is responsible for making sure those driving his/her vehicle do not drive intoxicated. The camera is an added anti-circumvention feature and adds proof positive who took the test.

## Couldn't someone just use compressed air to blow into the device?

No, the devices have temperature and air gauges to make sure this cannot occur. The interlock is looking for human breath.

## Could an interlock stop a person's car in traffic, making a more dangerous hazard?

Interlocks are hooked up to a vehicle's starter system, not to the engine itself. The interlock does not have the ability to stop the vehicle once it is running for safety reasons.

## Is it dangerous to provide a running retest?

Interlocks give the user 6 minutes to take the retest – enough time to pull over – to perform the retest.

## Are ignition interlocks constitutional?

Ex parte Elliott, 950 S.W.2d 714, 716 (Tex.App.-Fort Worth 1997) held interlocks are constitutional, not oppressive and provide public safety

## Do interlocks inconvenience family members who share the offender's vehicle?

No, they can drive the vehicle as well; they simply must blow into the device and prove sobriety before the car will start. Having an interlock installed on an offender's vehicle allows the offender and his or her family to continue to drive legally.

## What if someone's health inhibits them from providing a sufficient breath sample?

Individuals with low lung capacities due to being ill, having asthma or pulmonary disorders are generally able to provide the needed breath sample. If they can demonstrate that they are unable, the device settings can be adjusted, or they can apply for a medical waiver.

## What if offenders say they just are not going to drive or get a license to avoid having to install an interlock?

They can and do. Offenders choosing not to drive should be required to use some other form of alternative alcohol monitoring, to demonstrate sobriety. In Hancock County, Indiana, alcohol ignition interlock installation rates increased from 20 percent to 62 percent when an alternative alcohol monitoring technology was used. These policies alone reduced DWI rates by 40 percent for first offenders and 22 percent for repeat offenders.

## THE FACTS:

20 Manufacturers are certified in Texas; 372 Interlock service centers throughout Texas.

**Technology allows the Probation Officer to work SMARTER not harder. Interlock is the Probation Officer in the Car!**

**Recent Research demonstrated interlocks on First offenders reduced alcohol related deaths 15 %. Comparing its safety benefit to Air Bags. Wiebe-Kaufman 2016**