

# 1. New Technology Can Prevent Drunken Driving ; Conference Highlights Latest Innovations, But Reluctance by Courts to Use Them Remains the Biggest Roadblock

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ALBUQUERQUE, N.M., June 15 /PRNewswire/ -- Anti-drunk driving technology could become a major factor in reducing the 13,000 deaths and half-million injuries caused by drunk driving crashes each year - - but only if courts start widely using these proven devices. . Researchers from around the world, along with law enforcement and criminal justice officials, will showcase these new and emerging technologies that can reduce crashes, injuries and fatalities at a two-day conference beginning next week. Sponsored by MADD, the International DUI Technology Symposium on June 19 and 20 in Albuquerque will highlight the latest innovations, including alcohol-detecting sensors, anklet devices that test alcohol levels in skin and **ignition interlock** programs for repeat DUI offenders. The theme for the symposium is "A Nation without Drunk Driving."; While research shows that technology can clearly help detect and prevent impaired driving, many courts have chosen not to use it. . "We have technological solutions that can very likely save lives - - it's time we started fully using them," said Paul Marques, Ph. D., senior research scientist with PIRE Public Services Research Institute, who is moderating the initial plenary session at the symposium. "Most states and communities could employ this technology right away and see immediate benefits in reducing impaired driving. But they're not doing it." . The best-known anti-drunken driving technology is the **ignition interlock**, which requires a driver to breathe into a tube hooked to an alcohol sensor before the car will start. **Ignition interlock** has a 20-year record of reducing impaired driving recidivism, and research has proven its effectiveness. However, while more than 40 states have legalized such programs mainly for repeat offenders, and some states, such as New Mexico, mandate them for all convicted DUI

offenders, courts more often than not simply decline to order **ignition interlock** to be used. . "With about 1.4 million DUI arrests each year, fewer than 10 percent of all DUI offenders ever drive with an interlock," Marques said. "We can do better than that." . Newer promising technologies include passive alcohol sensors and transdermal alcohol sensors. These devices are usually based on an alcohol fuel-cell, the same kind of alcohol sensors in most interlocks and portable **breath testers** Transdermal alcohol sensors lock onto the ankle of the offender; these devices can detect alcohol from the sweat on the skin surface, then store and quietly upload this information to a remote server -- even while the offender sleeps. . Passive sensors can be embedded in a flashlight and used by police officers at the roadside to test for alcohol in the air near the mouth of a driver. They can establish probable cause for further sobriety tests. These devices can markedly improve detection at sobriety checkpoints by police, according to James Fell, senior program director at PIRE Public Services Research Institute, who is giving a presentation at the symposium estimating the potential lives saved by the widespread use of these technologies. Police officers relying on traditional methods will miss about half of all drivers with blood alcohol concentrations above the legal limit at sobriety checkpoints. . "These passive sensors are excellent screening and detection tools, but are very much underutilized," said Fell, a former member of the MADD national board. "If used together with sobriety checkpoints, they could go a long way toward deterring impaired driving." . PIRE, or Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation, is a national nonprofit public health research institute with centers in eight cities. Images of new technology are available upon request. For more information on the conference or to arrange an interview with the researchers, please contact Michelle Blackston at [mblackston@pire.org](mailto:mblackston@pire.org) or at (888) 846-7473. . CONTACT: . Michelle Blackston, Media Relations Manager . (888) 846-7473 . [mblackston@pire.org](mailto:mblackston@pire.org) . SOURCE Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation

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