



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 12, 2009

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400 DWI OFFENDERS PARTICIPATING IN STATE'S IGNITION INTERLOCK PROGRAM

Program Ensures DWI Offenders Drive Safely, Legally

ST. PAUL — In July, Minnesota began a statewide ignition interlock program aimed to combat the issue of unlicensed DWI offenders continuing to drive — and drive impaired — following arrest. The program allows certain DWI offenders to regain driving privileges by having an ignition interlock device installed in their vehicles.

In the four months since the program began, 401 participants have enrolled. A previous 2007–2008 ignition interlock pilot project in Beltrami and Hennepin counties had 91 participants. The program is administered by the Minnesota Department of Public Safety (DPS) which today unveiled a website outlining the program, www.MinnesotaIgnitionInterlock.org.

Interlocks prevent a vehicle from being started if the device detects an alcohol-concentration level (0.02) after the driver blows into its tube. The device calls for re-tests after the initial test, and has features that help restrict others from starting the vehicle and then allowing the offender to drive impaired.

Anyone arrested for DWI in Minnesota can participate in the program but must meet requirements, including paying a reinstatement fee and applying for a new license. Once enrolled, participants are given limited or full driving privileges with the requirement that they drive a vehicle that has an ignition interlock installed from one to six years, depending on their offense.

Research from the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation reports interlock devices can reduce repeat DWI offenses by 45 percent to 90 percent. Currently, about 13 states have laws that require interlock use after a first-time DWI arrest. MADD nationally supports interlock for all DWI offenders.

“The program’s purpose is to maintain safer roads and allow people to drive safely and legally so they can be a productive citizen,” says Jean Ryan, alcohol programs coordinator at DPS Office of Traffic Safety. “Participants can drive to work, attend AA and treatment when required, and ensure that they will not drive impaired to avoid future DWI arrests, or worse, a fatal crash.”

Each year, more than 60 percent of violators are first-time offenders, yet around 40 percent of offenders have multiple DWIs on record. Forty-one percent of those who incur one violation will incur a second DWI, and nearly 20 percent of those arrests will occur within one year of the original offense. Each year, Minnesota alcohol-related crashes account for up to 200 deaths and 400 serious injuries. One in eight Minnesota drivers has a DWI on record.

Typically, a person arrested for DWI may not drive for at least 90 days, and in some cases, up to seven years depending on the offense level. Participating in the interlock program allows a person arrested for DWI to begin driving 15–30 days following the arrest.

The interlock program costs \$3 to \$4 a day depending on the ignition interlock device. This does not include the installation (\$90–\$100) and removal (\$50) fee, the driver’s license reinstatement (\$680), or DWI driver’s exam fees (cost varies). DWI offenders would need to pay the reinstatement and related license fees regardless of participating, once they are permitted to regain their license.

The website provides checklists for potential participants to help them understand what is needed to comply based on their offense level.

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- Alcohol and Gambling Enforcement
- Bureau of Criminal Apprehension
- Driver and Vehicle Services
- Emergency Communication Networks
- Homeland Security and Emergency Management
- Minnesota State Patrol
- Office of Communications
- Office of Justice Programs
- Office of Traffic Safety
- State Fire Marshal