

ALCOHOL INTERLOCKS: RESEARCH UPDATE



Research has shown alcohol ignition interlocks are one of the most proven and effective tools to prevent impaired driving, reduce repeat offenses, and reduce alcohol-related crashes (Willis et al. 2005; Kanable 2010; Elder et al. 2011; Fielder et al. 2013; McCartt et al. 2013; Voas et al 2013; Beck et al. 2015; Vanlaar et al. 2016; Kaufman and Wiebe 2016). For this reason, ignition interlocks are widely used with all impaired driving offenders, and installation rates have increased substantially in the past decade. According to the data from the annual interlock installation data collection conducted by the Traffic Injury Research Foundation, USA, Inc. (TIRF USA), nationally 294,340 new alcohol ignition interlock devices (IIDs) were installed in 2016 and 293,192 in 2017. These numbers represent 1.1% and 0.7% increases, respectively, from the 291,189 new installations in 2015 (Robertson et al. 2018). New research continues to inform program administrators, legislators, and the public about the effectiveness of alcohol ignition interlocks programs and program features. These findings also provide much-needed guidance to shape the development of operational practices and new program features. This briefing note summarizes new interlock research findings from a state program evaluation and the influence of laws on fatal crashes, as well as strategies to address the problem of non-installation by offenders.

COLORADO IGNITION INTERLOCK PROGRAM EVALUATION

In 2019, the Colorado Office of Behavioral Health published a comprehensive evaluation of their ignition interlock program. The general purpose of this evaluation was to measure the impact of the program on alcohol-impaired driving in the state. Outcomes related to education and treatment programs as well as probation services were examined to gauge the impact of these programs individually and combined to reduce impaired driving recidivism rates.

Objectives. Four primary questions were included in the baseline impaired driving intervention systems evaluation:

1. What was the impact of the interlock program on impaired driving recidivism?
2. Did interlock participation impact education and treatment compliance and completion rates?
3. Did interlock participation impact probation compliance and completion rates?
4. Was there a cumulative impact of impaired driving intervention programs?

Methods. The study period for this evaluation was June 1, 2010 to December 31, 2013. Data were collected from the CO Division of Motor Vehicles, the CO Office of Behavioral Health, and the CO Division of Probation Services. A data set was created using these data sources. It included offenders who were subject to the interlock program and offenders who were not subject to the interlock program (i.e., drug offenses). The data set captured:

- 85,106 impaired driving convictions;
- 35,292 interlock program enrollees;
- 42,290 clients in education and treatment programs; and,
- 27,918 probationers.

Results. The evaluation revealed the program in Colorado was effective in reducing impaired driving recidivism rates. Specifically, the interlock program showed a longer-term reduction in recidivism of 14.7% for successful program participants compared to 21.3% for those who were not. Offenders who completed education, treatment, and probation services programs had a much lower, significant recidivism rate of 13.12% compared to 26.07% of offenders who failed to complete any of the three programs.

The evaluation also showed the installation rate was 41.5% during the evaluation period. This rate was much higher when compared to other state programs with the average installation rate being 20%. Overall, these results demonstrated when interlock program participation was paired with additional programs, the installation of an interlock device was an effective countermeasure to reduce alcohol-impaired driving.

Recommendations. Based on the evaluation of Colorado's program the following recommendations were made:

1. Continue the delivery of the program and seek ways to increase the installation rate.
2. Strengthen linkages between the interlock program, education and treatment services, and probation programs.
3. Enhance monitoring of interlock compliance to increase completion

rates, particularly among first offender participants.

4. Consider removing the option to wait out the interlock period for first offenders.
5. Improve data collection to facilitate future evaluations

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STATE ALCOHOL IGNITION INTERLOCK LAWS AND FATAL CRASHES

Alcohol impaired driving has been a cause of thousands of road deaths annually. To combat this problem, 45 states mandated some form of ignition interlock law for drivers convicted of alcohol-impaired driving. There were 10,497 people killed in crashes involving drivers with blood alcohol concentration (BAC) 0.08+ g/dL in the United States in 2016, and such crashes cost society an estimated \$125 billion in 2010 alone.

Methods. Teoh et al. (2018) examined the differences in three interlock laws by comparing the number of alcohol-impaired passenger vehicle drivers involved in fatal crashes between 2001–2014 in the United States across states and time. Laws requiring interlocks for drivers convicted of alcohol-impaired driving included repeat offenders, repeat offenders and high-BAC offenders, all offenders, or none. The years 2001-2014 were selected because in 2001, the actual codified text of the laws became clearer to interpret and 2014 was the most recent year for which all data was available. Since interlock laws varied in California as part of a four-county pilot project, California was excluded from this study.

Results. In 2001, three states required all offenders to install an interlock, three states required interlocks for repeat and high-BAC offenders, and thirteen states required interlocks for repeat offenders only. In contrast, 20 states required all offenders to get an interlock, thirteen required interlocks for repeat and high-BAC offenders, and twelve states required interlocks for repeat offenders in 2014.

Teoh et al. (2018) showed states with all-offender laws were effective in reducing impaired driving fatal crashes (16% fewer

crashes with BAC 0.08+), compared to states with no law. However, states with repeat-offender laws were associated with a small benefit (3% reduction in crashes involving an impaired driver) compared to states with no law, and there was an additional benefit of including high-BAC offenders (8% reduction in impaired drivers in fatal crashes, compared with no law).

Conclusions. Laws mandating interlock devices, particularly all-offender laws, are effective in reducing the number of alcohol-impaired drivers in fatal crashes. Furthermore, these laws are especially effective in preventing fatal crashes among repeat impaired driving offenders. For this reason, it is important for states to not only continue to require interlocks for all alcohol-impaired driving offenders but also for states to follow up with the non-installer offender population.

The full report, published by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, can be found online at: <https://www.iihs.org/topics/bibliography/ref/2156>

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ENFORCEMENT STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS NON-COMPLIANCE WITH INTERLOCK INSTALLATION IN NEW YORK

Despite considerable progress reducing impaired driving in New York in the past two decades, still one-third of all traffic fatalities in New York were alcohol-impaired (BAC=.08+g/dl) in 2016 according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA, 2019), and 26% of fatalities in New York were alcohol-related. There was a total of 250,671 felony and misdemeanor impaired driving arrests in New York between January of 2013 and July of 2018, with a conviction rate of 44.7%. Between August 15, 2010 and June 30, 2018, 135,538 orders for interlocks were reported by probation departments and conditional discharge monitors. A total of 36,167 (26.7%) were installed. In light of the low installation rate of ignition interlocks by convicted impaired drivers, a pilot project was undertaken to increase compliance with installation by targeting impaired drivers who failed to install a device when ordered to do so.

Recent interlock legislation in NY:

- 2009: Leandra’s Law was introduced, making it an automatic felony on the first offense to drive drunk with a person aged 15 years or younger inside the vehicle, and setting the blood alcohol content (BAC) at .08.
- 2013: The period of interlock restriction was extended from 6 months to 12 months, and the device could be installed prior to sentencing.
- 2015: Subdivision 2 of section 65.15 of the Penal Law was amended to clarify non-compliance with conditions of conditional discharge or probation. The interlock requirement will remain in effect and the installation period could be extended.

Pilot project. To combat non-installers, a pilot project was proposed by the Enforcement Team of the New York State Impaired Driving Advisory Council. The initiative was coordinated by the Department of Criminal Justice Office of Probation and Correctional Alternatives and Office of Public Safety. Six jurisdictions participated in the pilot project: Dutchess, Oneida, and Onondage counties in 2016, and Albany, Ontario, and Orange counties in 2017. Training was provided to more than 150 law enforcement professionals from the six counties.

Since research has shown an effective way to reduce impaired driving is to increase the perceived risk of being stopped and arrested by law enforcement among the public, multiple high visibility enforcement campaigns were conducted within the six counties. The aim was to increase public awareness about impaired driving through publicizing events and communicating the goals of law enforcement agencies to reduce impaired driving.

The project started with creating a list of offenders who received an interlock restriction when sentenced. It also included offenders who installed an interlock prior to their sentence in addition to offenders who were released from prison and sentenced to a consecutive term of supervision as well as required to install an interlock upon release. Upon identification of

these offenders, a series of enforcement activities were conducted between Memorial Day and Labor Day. This timeframe was chosen as more impaired driving offenses typically occurred in summer months. These activities included directed reports to probation with surveillance upon departure, check points at Victim Impact Panels, surveillance at Impaired Driver Programs, home contacts, targeted surveillance of suspected non-complaint operators, education of family members regarding requirements of the law, and increased public awareness through media.

Results. Outcomes of the 2016 pilot in Dutchess, Oneida, and Onondage counties included a total of 729 targeted offenders. Of these offenders, 7.95% (n=58) were charged as a result of the enforcement activities and 6.44% (n=47) violations were filed.

Results of the 2017 pilot in Albany, Ontario, and Orange counties included a total of 1,501 targeted offenders. Of these offenders, 72.75% (n=1,092) were contact by law enforcement, 2.39% (n=36) were charged as a result of the enforcement activities and 3.99% (n=60) violations were filed.

Recommendations. Enforcement is a crucial strategy to prevent future impaired driving fatalities. Offenders required to install an interlock device must actually install and use the device to achieve reductions in recidivism and fatal crashes. Based on the results from the pilot project, the NY Department of Criminal Justice Services made five recommendations:

1. During traffic stops, law enforcement agencies are reminded to consider interlock requirements, and to charge drivers for driving without an interlock when appropriate.
2. Consider opportunities for local interagency interlock Non-Installer Enforcement initiatives.
3. Consider strategies to educate families of offenders regarding the interlock program and requirements under the law.
4. Develop strategies in your community to raise public awareness regarding the requirements of state law.
5. Periodically reconvene your county

interlock planning committee to review data and ensure effective local implementation of state law.

Leonard Price

ABOUT THE ASSOCIATION OF IGNITION INTERLOCK PROGRAM ADMINISTRATORS

The Association of Ignition Interlock Program Administrators (AIIPA) is an organization composed primarily of federal, state, county, parish, or municipal employees who provide specialized knowledge to an ignition interlock program. The organization was formed in November, 2011 as a result of the National Ignition Interlock Summit sponsored by the Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA), the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

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