

Alcohol ignition interlocks

Swedish strategy 2007

Drink-driving kills. Throughout EU about 25 per cent of the fatal traffic accidents are caused by drivers impaired by alcohol, other drugs or fatigue. That means at least 10 000 people are killed in accidents caused by impaired drivers every year. The alcolock is an effective way to reduce drink-driving and save lives. Since 1999, Sweden has an alcolock programme for drink-driving offenders. We are also working to get the technology voluntarily installed in commercial motor vehicles and public transports. Now we want to move on.

Drink-driving offenders

One third of the drink-driving offenders in Sweden are recidivists. Together with other measures such as rehabilitation programmes, the alcolock can stop drink-driving offenders from relapsing.

- » Sweden is preparing rules about alcolocks as a condition to get the driving licence back after drink-driving.
- » The alcolock programme as an alternative to revocation of the driving licence for drink-driving offenders will be continued and improved.

Drink-driving prevention and quality-assured commercial transports

Drink-driving is just as common among commercial drivers as among other drivers. Accidents with heavy vehicles involved often have serious consequences. Therefore it is important to increase the use of supporting technologies that can prevent impaired drivers in commercial motor vehicles.

- » Alcolocks or other technologies that prevent impaired driving should be fitted into all new commercial busses and lorries.
- » Compulsory rules for alcolocks in vehicles used by governmental authorities is being prepared.
- » Companies will be encouraged to use alcolocks in company motor vehicles voluntarily as a quality assurance.
- » Promotion of the development of alcolocks or similar technologies that discovers and warns if the driver is impaired by alcohol, other drugs or fatigue. The aim is to find a cheap and easy solution that can become a standard in most cars, in the same way as other security systems, to support the driver.



Short facts about...

» drink-driving prevention and quality-assured commercial transports

Companies working with quality assured transports find it difficult to monitor sober driving without the use of technical aids. The number of vehicles equipped with alcolocks to guarantee sober driving is growing rapidly in Sweden. More and more public buyers of transports specifically request transport companies to guarantee sober school transports and other purchased passenger traffic such as transportation of disabled persons or local bus transports. Experience has shown that companies that have introduced alcolocks as a part of their drink-driving prevention system, have been able to stop potential drink-drivers.

The Swedish motor industry has a long tradition of thinking in terms of road safety. We are now further developing the cooperation between the public sector, the motor industry and the universities. This is done through the research programme Intelligent Vehicle Safety System – IVSS. The programme lays the foundation for and introduces new safety solutions within vehicle and road-side systems. One of the key areas are active safety and preventive solutions and several IVSS-project are dealing with alcohol as well as drowsiness and distraction.

» the alcohol ignition interlock programme (alcolock programme)

In Sweden about 6 000 driving licences are revoked every year as a result of impaired driving offences. Revoking a licence is strictly an administrative road safety measure and not a penalty. Drivers who have been caught with an illegal BAC level (0,02 per cent) can voluntarily choose a two-year alcohol ignition interlock programme instead of a licence revocation.

The driver may only drive cars fitted with an individual alcohol ignition interlock during the programme. If the driver has a too high alcohol level it will not be possible to start the vehicle. The alcolock also requires a renewed test at random intervals during the trip. In case of too high alcohol level during the drive, the display informs the driver that he has to stop the car. This information is combined with the sounding of the horn.

During the programme the driver has to provide regular blood tests to control the drinking behaviour. During the second year the alcohol bio-markers must indicate a sober lifestyle, otherwise the participant is not allowed to stay in the programme.

Participants in the programme reduce their alcohol consumption compared to the control group. After completion, the rate of recidivism was about 60 per cent lower, and the police-reported traffic accidents about 80 per cent lower than during the five-year period prior to the offence. The programme has also had positive effects on sick leave. The programme concept is now being evaluated in order to make changes to improve the participation rate and the number of participants fulfilling the programme.



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