



National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
Our Mission: Save lives, prevent injuries, reduce vehicle-related crashes

NHTSA Calls for Increased Use of Ignition Interlocks for Repeat Drunk Driving Offenders

August 27 2007

JUDGES and prosecutors can significantly boost traffic safety by increasing the use of the ignition interlock technology as a penalty for drunk driving offenders, according to National Highway Traffic Safety Administrator Nicole Nason.

Nason made the recommendation during an Aug. 22 meeting with judges, court professionals, safety equipment manufacturers and national safety advocates to discuss the role of alcohol ignition interlocks for repeat offenders to reduce drunk driving fatalities.

"We need to expand the use of interlock technology in order to prohibit drunk drivers from getting behind the wheel again and again," Nason said. "It is vital that judges and prosecutors employ all the tools at their disposal to ensure that repeat offenders don't have the opportunity to cause harm."

Nason said that interlocks are currently used in approximately 100,000 driving-while-intoxicated (DWI) cases each year, only about 20 percent of the cases for which they could be used. She added that such measures are necessary since drunk driving fatalities have stagnated. In 2006, 13,470 fatalities occurred in crashes involving at least one driver or motorcycle operator who had a .08 or above Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) compared with 13,582 in 2005.

"It is unacceptable for us to allow known drunk driving offenders back on the road without some protection for the responsible drivers," Nason said.

There are approximately 1.5 million arrests each year of impaired drivers, a third of these are repeat offenders. In almost every state, except Alabama, Hawaii, Maine, South Dakota and Vermont, judges can order interlocks for drunk driving offenders.