

June 17, 2008

Tough new rules to keep chronic drunk drivers off Alberta's roads

Edmonton... Starting July 1, drivers who are convicted of having twice the legal limit or higher of alcohol in their bloodstreams will be required to attach alcohol sensors to their vehicle ignitions before they are allowed to drive again.

The Mandatory Ignition Interlock Program applies to drivers convicted of drinking and driving with a blood-alcohol reading of double the legal limit of .08/80 milligrams per cent or higher, as well as those who refused to provide a breath or blood sample, or were repeat offenders over the past 10 years.

“We already have laws to get drunk drivers off the road,” said Transportation Minister Luke Ouellette. “These are extra measures to ensure that people who show a blatant disregard for the law finally get the message that drinking and driving is not acceptable.”

After serving the court-ordered suspension, convicted drivers must apply to the Alberta Transportation Safety Board to have an ignition interlock installed in the vehicle they will be driving. Their driver's licence will not be reissued until they have the mechanism installed, at their own expense.

“Holding a driver's licence is a privilege that comes with conditions”, said Alberta Transportation Safety Board Chair, Gary Boddez. “Being convicted of drinking and driving means the driver has violated the trust relationship with the province. One way to re-establish the trust relationship is to provide hard evidence by installing an ignition interlock device, to show that the driver can drive without drinking.”

The ignition interlock is an alcohol-sensing device attached to a vehicle's ignition system. If it detects a pre-set level of alcohol, the driver will not be able to start or drive the vehicle. The device also calls for random breath samples while the vehicle is being driven. If the driver does not provide a “pass” sample within a certain time frame, the vehicle's horn is activated.

At least once every 60 days, participants must bring their vehicles to the installer who inspects the equipment. The installer transfers the recorded information, which includes all “pass”, “fail”, and “warning” attempts, to the Alberta Transportation Safety Board. Reinstatement of unrestricted driving privileges at the end of the suspension period depends on the participant's performance in the program. Monitoring lasts for at least six months, during which there is a zero-tolerance policy.

Participants pay for all costs such as application fees, installation and monthly rental of the interlock devices, registration costs for mandatory impaired-driving courses and fees for conditional driver's licences. The interlock device remains on the vehicle until the licence suspension period is over, or longer, at the discretion of the Alberta Transportation Safety Board, based on the participant's performance on the program.

-30-

Attachment: Backgrounder on the Mandatory Ignition Interlock Program

Media inquiries may be directed to:

Eileen McDonald

Gary Boddez

Communications

Alberta Transportation

780-422-0842; 780-913-4609 Cell phone

eileen.mcdonald@gov.ab.ca

Chair

Alberta Transportation Safety Board

780-427-7178

gary.boddez@gov.ab.ca

To call toll free within Alberta dial 310-0000.

June 17, 2008

Mandatory Ignition Interlock Program

- In 1990, Alberta became the first province to implement the voluntary ignition interlock program.
- The current Alberta program is voluntary and allows drivers convicted of drinking and driving or refusing a breath demand to obtain a restricted driver's licence, with permission of the court, after serving mandatory driving prohibition.
- The new Mandatory Ignition Interlock Program is effective on July 1, 2008. The program is for convicted drivers whose blood alcohol reading is double the legal limit or higher, as well as those who refused to provide a breath or blood sample, or were repeat offenders over the past 10 years.
- Convicted drivers must apply to the Alberta Transportation Safety Board to have an ignition interlock installed in a vehicle of their choice. **Their driver's licence will not be reissued until they have the mechanism installed, at their own expense.**
- The ignition interlock device is hand wired into the vehicle and requires a driver to provide a breath sample prior to starting the vehicle's engine and at random intervals while driving. If the results of the sample exceed a predetermined level, the engine will not start, or if driving is underway, the driver will be required to pull the vehicle over and stop.
- The costs of the system are: \$150 for installation; \$50 for removal; \$105 a month rental fee; a \$63 application fee and a registry agent fee, which may vary for sale of the application. These costs do not include GST.
- Drivers convicted of drinking and driving must also complete either the Planning Ahead course at a cost of \$200, or the \$475 Impact course, pay a fee for a restricted driver's licence and complete a road test to prove they can safely drive a vehicle with the ignition interlock installed.
- Ignition interlocks help people separate drinking alcohol from driving. While enrolled in the program, drivers are less likely to re-offend or drive while they are suspended.

-30-

Media inquiries may be directed to:

Eileen McDonald
Communications
Alberta Transportation
780-422-0842; 780-913-4609 Cell phone
eileen.mcdonald@gov.ab.ca

Gary Boddez
Chair
Alberta Transportation Safety Board
780-427-7178
gary.boddez@gov.ab.ca

To call toll free within Alberta dial 310-0000.