

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE VIRGINIA INTERLOCK PROGRAM

1. **What is an ignition interlock?** It is a small, hand-held, one-piece alcohol sensor, roughly the size and shape of a cordless telephone that weighs a few ounces. The device is wired into a vehicle's electrical system and requires a breath test before allowing the vehicle to be started.
2. **How does it work?** A driver blows into it and measures his or her breath alcohol content to determine if it is above or below a certain set point. If alcohol is detected at or above the set point, the unit will not allow the vehicle to start. Once the unit allows the driver to start the vehicle, it will require random rolling retests to ensure the driver is not consuming alcohol while driving.
3. **What is a rolling retest?** After a driver starts a vehicle, the unit will require another breath test within 10 to 20 minutes. If the test is successful, the driver will then be subject to rolling retests every 20 to 60 minutes during the operation of the vehicle. If the driver fails a retest, or declines to submit to one when required, the unit will cause the vehicle's headlights to flash and the horn to honk intermittently until the vehicle is turned off or the driver successfully takes the retest. If the vehicle is turned off, the unit will require the driver to pass a test before the vehicle can be restarted.
4. **How else does the unit monitor the driver?** The unit contains a small computer that records all start attempts, the results of all tests, and the results of all rolling retests. It also records the time of day the vehicle is started and the time of day the vehicle is turned off. Additionally, any attempts to disconnect or tamper with the unit are recorded. Thus, a case manager or probation officer can review a person's driving history.
5. **How is a person in the interlock program monitored?** The participant appears at one of the service centers throughout the state and a technician downloads the recorded data from the interlock into a central computer. The monitoring agency or agent determines the frequency of appearances to a service location. The most common duration is one month. If any violations were committed in the previous month, a report is forwarded to the case manager or probation officer for review. The vehicle's odometer is checked for total mileage driven and all connections are checked for tampering.
6. **What happens if the participant does not appear as required?** The interlock unit is set to "lock out" after a grace period of 5 days if the participant fails to appear for monitoring. If this happens, the vehicle will not start and the participant must tow the vehicle to a service center or a technician must be sent to the vehicle to download the unit and reset it. The participant is charged for this extra service. Additionally, the failure to appear for monitoring is reported to the case manager or probation officer.

7. **What does it cost?** The program was developed to require the DUI offender to pay all costs. There is a \$50.00 installation fee, \$55.00 per month lease fee and tax. The service provider also collects an additional \$5.00 per month from participants in the Virginia Alcohol Safety Action program to help defray the costs of monitoring the offenders.
8. **How does a person get into the interlock program?** The court issuing a restricted license has the legal authority to require any DUI offender to drive only an interlock-equipped vehicle. In cases where the offender has two DUI convictions within a 5-year period the law requires the use of an ignition interlock on all vehicles partially or wholly registered to the offender if a restricted license is issued. If a restricted license is not issued in such cases the offender must use interlocks for a six month minimum period before gaining license reinstatement at the end of the suspension period. In many cases when the individual is an habitual offender seeking restricted license or seeking full restoration of driving privileges the court will order the person to use an interlock to demonstrate his or her ability to avoid driving after drinking. Participants can also volunteer to enroll in the ignition interlock program before a court date is set or as a preventive tool for someone with a tendency to drink and drive.
9. **How does a person get an interlock installed?** Courts usually issue forms DC-265 and DC-266 requiring the offender to report to the ASAP center in his or her area. The form DC-265, Restrictive Driver's License Order, requires the individual to attend ASAP education programs. The DC-266, Ignition interlock Order, form requires the individual to install an interlock device in his or her car in order to drive. The ASAP case manager will enroll the offender into the ASAP program and will also contact the service provider to arrange an appointment for the installation of the device. Once the device is installed, the offender must report to the case manager to show proof of installation. In addition, the service provider sends a report to the case manager confirming the installation. If the offender does not appear for installation within 30 days from the date on the DC-266 form, the case manager will report this to the court and the offender may lose his or her restrictive driving privileges.
10. **What types of reports are generated?** There are several types of reports issued by the service provider. The installation report informs the case manager that an ignition interlock device was installed on a certain date in a specific vehicle. A failure to appear for installation report is sent if the offender fails to have the interlock installed within the required 30 days. A violation report is sent out only when there is evidence of violations; high breath alcohol content, failure to take a rolling retest, starting the vehicle without first passing a breath test or any indication of tampering with the device. Quarterly reports are sent out to inform the offenders' case manager of the dates and results of their monitoring visits in which violations have not been detected. A removal report is produced at the time of de-installation of the device.
11. **What do I do after receiving a report if I have any questions?** You can contact our Customer Service Representatives at 1-800-841-6444 or the Program Coordinator at 1-804-675-2227.

- 12. Can other people use the vehicle equipped with interlock?** Yes. All drivers of the vehicle are asked to appear with the offender at the time of installation to be trained in how to use the device. The participant is responsible for ensuring that any other users of the vehicle comply with all program rules.
- 13. What if the participant gets someone else to blow into the device to start his car?** This can be done. However, since the unit requires rolling retests, the driver would have to take the person along. Experience shows that such behavior is detected rather quickly because of the other patterns of behavior associated with such actions. Additionally, the device requires a specific breath testing pattern that is difficult to teach others especially if the teacher is under the influence.
- 14. What if the participant has trouble with the unit after normal office hours?** The service provider is on call 24 hours a day 365 days a year and can be reached with a toll-free call. Our technicians will go to the participant at no charge if the interlock unit caused the problem.
- 15. What if the person can't afford an interlock?** The cost is \$2.00 per day or the cost of one drink. The Virginia Insurance Commission has authorized insurance carriers in Virginia to offer discounted assigned risk insurance premiums for persons participating in the interlock program. At least one carrier, Dairyland Insurance Company, has implemented the discount. Cost comparisons show that many participants could lower their high-risk insurance rates nearly as much as the interlock costs the participants to lease. There is also an indigent program established by law that allows the waiver of some or all of the program costs by the court ordering the ignition interlock device. In addition, courts can suspend or reduce any fines imposed.
- 16. Are interlocks used in other states?** Yes. There are over 30,000 interlocks in use in the United States and in Canada. The following states are among the states using interlocks: Arkansas, California, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Nebraska, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and, of course, Virginia.
- 17. How effective are interlocks in preventing drunk driving and in reducing recidivism rates?** There are numerous studies evaluating the effectiveness of interlocks. In one study commissioned by the NIA, researchers found that interlock equipped drivers were 66% less likely to re-offend than DUI offenders who drove unequipped vehicles were. In a study commissioned by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, researchers found similar results with the interlock-equipped drivers being 65% less likely to re-offend. In the same study, 82% of the interlock users stated that the device had been "very successful" in preventing the offender from driving after consuming alcohol. The same study also disclosed that 71% of the offenders found that the device had been "very effective" in changing their drinking

and driving behavior. In a recent study done by the University of Maryland, 1500 repeat offenders were divided into two random groups - one required to use interlocks as a condition of restricted privileges and one not required. After one year, it was found that the interlock drivers had a recidivism rate of 65% lower than the non-interlock drivers did. The West Virginia Division of Motor Vehicles reports a recidivism rate for its DUI offenders as being 33%. West Virginia drivers who have been in the interlock program have a recidivism rate of 0.5%, according to DMV statistics. Copies of these reports are available from Ignition Interlock Group of Virginia at 1-804-675-2227 or 1-800-841-6444.

**18. Who should have an ignition interlock as a condition of licensing?** It is suggested that interlocks may be required of first offenders who had a high blood alcohol content at the time of arrest or who may exhibit other alcohol dependent traits. Repeat offenders who do not fall within the 5-year mandatory period in which interlocks are required should be given special consideration for interlock installation to increase public safety. Habitual Offenders may (in line with offender assessment guidelines) be required to use the interlock to obtain a restricted license. If an offender is eligible for full restoration but is likely to continue drinking, an interlock installation and a period of monitoring should be carefully considered. Interlocks can also be a useful monitoring tool for bail and probation of offenders who are yet to be tried or ready to be released into society.