



Alcohol Interlocks as instruments for enhanced road safety and prevention of alcohol problems.

Guidelines for authorities, transport companies, transport workers, unions, governments and political decision makers

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CONTEXT

The Norwegian National Committee, "Alcohol Interlocks for Motor Vehicles" have made a report and a program for the comprehensive use of alcohol interlocks in commercial vehicles with the purpose of winding down the scepticism and opposition against the use of alcohol interlocks, and prepare a comprehensive guidelines report for the CENELEC committee and EU-commission preparing an EU-directive for alcohol interlocks in commercial vehicles.

The CENELEC Alcohol Interlock Committee was established in 2003. In the past decade, the committee has done a significant job to create universal technical standards and guidelines for the voluntary use of alcohol interlocks.

From being an instrument to control drunk drivers in offender programs (USA, Canada, France, Netherlands and Sweden) the alcohol interlock is now being considered to be an instrument with capability of significantly reducing road fatalities caused by drunk driving. This is a highly sensible political issue, which politicians tends to hesitate entering. The same politicians are also worried by the high toll, and the heavy burden the enormous costs of alcohol related road fatalities draw on the national economies.

The European Parliament issued a resolution of 27 September 2011 on European road safety 2011-2020 (2010/2235(INI) where the EU-parliament:

Recommends that fitting of alcohol interlocks – with a small, scientifically-based range of tolerance for measurement – to all new types of commercial passenger and goods transport vehicles be made compulsory; calls on the Commission to prepare by 2013 a proposal for a Directive for the fitting of alcohol interlocks, including the relevant specifications for its technical implementation.

The Nordic Council 64th session, Helsinki, November 1st 2012:

Recommends the Member Countries to make alcohol interlocks compulsory for commercial and professional drivers in the Nordic Countries, Faeroe Island, Greenland and Aaland.

An EU-directive for alcohol interlocks in commercial vehicles will introduce compulsory general preventive use of alcohol interlocks for a large number of vehicles in all EU and EEA-countries in Europe. Related to equality in competition for transport companies, most of them operating in a cross-border market, there would also have to be introduced standardized laws, regulations, standards, guidelines and definitions in all EU and EEA-countries.

Challenges that would have to be overcome in time before the EU-directive will be empowered.

OBJECTIVES.

To find a more comprehensive program of how alcohol interlocks may be used to enhance traffic safety, transport quality, and become a requirement of employment within an alcohol policy of a company or authority, and they may be used for compliance monitoring. The creation of such a model would be prosperous both for reducing road fatalities and for reducing general alcohol problems among people in general.

For the introduction of alcohol interlocks it will be necessary to create credibility for the program by all involved, i.e. the drivers and their unions, transport companies and associates, public authorities and road administration authorities. The main actors involved in the use of alcohol interlocks in commercial vehicles would be:

- Transport customers
- Transport companies
- Transport workers
- International Transport Workers Federations
- Public and political authorities.

The Standards provided by the CENELEC Committee would function best if followed by legislation in the respective countries being influenced by the full-fledged standards. An alcohol interlock is a system comprising a breath alcohol measuring instrument and an immobilizer which may be easily installed in a motor vehicle. Alcohol interlocks that meet the relevant European Standards, should be used in commercial vehicles. The two key standards have been under updating and adjustment, to be published 2013:

Test methods and performance requirements specifically for alcohol interlocks are given in the European Standards EN 50436-1, for offender programs, EN 50436-2 for general preventive use (commercial vehicles and others), and the European Standard EN 50436-6 for data security from the alcohol interlock registry.

Countries have different definitions of when an attempt to drive under influence of alcohol is made. Norway and some others have legislation equalizing attempt to drive with fulfilled DUI. Using an alcohol interlock may, under this type of legislation, be doomed as an attempt to drive, and draw repercussion if the alcohol interlock go into a blocking position.

Definitions of “starting a motor vehicle” may also undergo some scrutiny with compulsory use of alcohol interlock in commercial vehicles. Today it is the starting of the motor (power engine) the alcohol interlock prevents. Transport vehicles may have the motor running during stops, either to provide heating for sensitive wares in cold days, or cooling of frozen wares in warm days. Bussing companies uses piquets to start bus motors in the winter time to provide heating. With alcohol interlocks blocking the motor itself, this may cause unsolvable problems. This may be solved by defining “starting of a motor vehicle” as setting the vehicle “in motion” which means that the alcohol interlock blocks the electronically operated gearbox, brakes or other interlock systems that prevent the vehicle from being moved under its own power without a legal test provided by an alcohol interlock.

Countries have also different limits for DUI, ranging from 0,0 to 0,2 for commercial driving. Using alcohol interlock as compulsory device in commercial vehicles would prompt common legislation for one limit defining DUI for all EU and EEA-countries, and the EU are now providing the ground for a common DUI limit of 0,2 for commercial vehicles for all EU and EEA-countries .

For the introduction of alcohol interlocks it is necessary to create credibility for the program by all involved, i.e. the drivers and their unions, transport companies and associates, public authorities and road administration authorities. To achieve this, the introductory process could be divided into several steps.

Decision and support:

In order to create a sense of commitment and involvement, management decisions based on the EU-directive for alcohol interlock in commercial vehicles, should be communicated at an early stage so that they permeate the entire organization from the decision makers to the actual drivers. This will also include drafts of agreements between the companies and the drivers and/or their unions. As well as standardized set of steps to be taken in case of alcohol interlocks going into locking positions after testing of drivers.

Policy and objectives:

A straightforward policy should be drafted with clear, realistic and quantifiable targets describing the direction and intention for the work ahead. This policy could be associated with legal issues and health and safety campaigns. The policy should be communicated repeatedly in order to be made known within the entire organization if it is to gain acceptance and stimulate a sense of involvement. The aim of this policy will both be to benefit the company standing, and the safeguarding of the employed drivers of the company.

Action plan and measures:

The action plan describes how the policy is to be put into effect, e.g. time schedules, allocation of responsibilities, etc. It should also take into consideration the individual employee's sense of integrity and job security. The measures undertaken through the plan could for example involve information campaigns, training and instruction programs in connection with the introduction of alcohol interlocks, or stipulating the use of alcohol interlocks in future transport procurements.

Monitoring and evaluation:

Monitoring and evaluation is a necessary part of a systematic work method to show whether the objectives of the policy have been achieved. This could be done for example by monitoring of:

- the data memory of the alcohol interlocks,
- manipulation attempts,
- false positive tests,
- regular calibration of the alcohol interlocks,
- traffic and work accidents,
- illness times of employees.

The data from the alcohol interlock registry are highly sensitive, and the handling will be under scrutiny of the countries Data Supervision Authorities. The companies would therefore have to have a coherent and comprehensive system to handle the data, as well as the follow up the results.

KEY OUTCOMES

For the introduction of alcohol interlocks it will be necessary to create credibility for the program by all involved, i.e. the drivers and their unions, transport companies and associates, public authorities and road administration authorities. In order to create a sense of commitment and involvement, management decisions for alcohol interlock in commercial vehicles, should be communicated at an early stage so that they permeate the entire organization from the decision makers to the actual drivers. This will also include drafts of agreements between the companies and the drivers and/or their unions. As well as standardized set of steps to be taken in case of alcohol interlocks going into locking positions after testing of drivers. A straightforward policy should be drafted with clear, realistic and quantifiable targets describing the direction and intention for the work ahead.

This policy could be associated with legal issues and health and safety campaigns. The policy should be communicated repeatedly in order to be made known within the entire organization if it is to gain acceptance and stimulate a sense of involvement. The aim of this policy will both be to benefit the company standing, and the safeguarding of the employed drivers of the company. The action plan describes how the policy is to be put into effect, e.g. time schedules, allocation of responsibilities, etc. It should also take into consideration the individual employee's sense of integrity and job security. The measures undertaken through the plan could for example involve information campaigns, training and instruction programs in connection with the introduction of alcohol interlocks, or stipulating the use of alcohol interlocks in future transport procurements. Monitoring and evaluation is a necessary part of a systematic work method to show whether the objectives of the policy have been achieved.

Dialogue with union representatives and other relevant bodies

An alcohol interlock could be considered as an intrusion in the personal environment. The obligation to inform and negotiate with the union when installing an alcohol interlock could vary from country to country depending on national laws and the contract between the employer and the employee.

Regardless of the rights the employers have to install the alcohol interlocks, it is valuable to have a dialogue with the workers and their unions in beforehand. The use of alcohol interlocks will also have impact on the employee's health and safety, which gives an opportunity of mutual understanding between the employer and the employee. The experiences from Norwegian Companies implementing alcohol interlocks shows that the alcohol interlock is rather quickly accepted as long as the management has had a proper dialogue with the employees before installing the alcohol interlocks

It should be a policy for each workplace preventing alcohol damage inclusive information and education campaigns, and to offer the employees with alcohol related troubles help and specialist care. Another area is to reduce the number of casualties and death in relation with traffic accidents.

For a transport company an alcohol and drug policy has three important purposes. It should:

- Contribute to quality assurance to customers and commissioners.
- Contribute to increased traffic safety
- Show concern about the companies employees.

Usually an alcohol abuse is covered a long time by the employee. When the problem

reveals it is often hard and expensive to deal with. And there is a big risk of accidents due to the alcohol problems of the employee. Alcohol interlocks installed in all of the companies vehicles could detect alcohol problems at an early phase to be confronted and solved, and thus enhance the alcohol and drug policy of the company.

The AKAN-model in Norway.

AKAN, The workplace advisory center for issues relating to alcohol, drugs and addictive gambling, was founded in 1963 by representatives from the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions [LO] and the Confederation of Norwegian Business and Industry [NHO].

AKAN's main objective is to contribute to:

- Prevent alcohol and drug problems in Norwegian enterprises.
- Develop methods for early intervention and enable employers and employees to take action.
- Provide help and assistance for employees already having developed a substance problem.

Through its work and activities, AKAN aims at qualifying employees and employers for constructive collaboration when encountering the challenges of alcohol and drug problems in the workplace.

Based on the data and records from the AKAN model in use in Norwegian Companies, related to alcohol and drug abuse in the workplace, 80% of employees with emerging alcohol problems, being incorporated in the AKAN model for prevention of alcohol and drug problems, are in full working condition within one year after their entry into this agreement.

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Regardless of the rights the employers have to install the alcohol interlocks, it is valuable to have a dialogue with the workers and their unions in beforehand. The use of alcohol interlocks will also have impact on the employee's health and safety, which gives an opportunity of mutual understanding between the employer and the employee. The experiences from Norwegian Companies implementing alcohol interlocks shows that the alcohol interlock is rather quickly accepted as long as the management has had a proper dialogue with the employees before installing the alcohol interlocks. For more than 40 years, in Norway the AKAN model, a joint venture between the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions [LO], the Confederation of Norwegian Business and Industry [NHO] and the Government, has contributed to the prevention and solving of alcohol and drug problems in Norwegian enterprises. The Norwegian National Committee "Alcohol Interlocks for Motor Vehicles" have adjusted the AKAN-model for use together with alcohol interlocks in commercial vehicles. For enhanced traffic safety and public health care.

Installing an alcohol interlock as a general preventive measure in vehicles for the safe transport of persons or goods such as hazardous goods transporters, trucks, lorries, coaches, taxis, trains, boats, snow mobiles or other modes of transportation can reduce accidents and related downtime. Alcohol interlocks may be used as a transport quality instrument for vehicles operated by companies or authorities. They may also be a requirement of employment within an alcohol policy of a company or authority, and they may be used for compliance monitoring.

The alcohol interlock in commercial vehicles may become an instrument of high value also in the prevention of people being exposed to the threat of falling into problems with alcohol and drugs. Thus, the use of alcohol interlock in commercial vehicles, combined with companies introducing programs of prevention and cure, not only enhances traffic safety by preventing drunk driving, but also may be key instrument in prevention of development of alcohol and drug problems in general.

Prevention and cure of emerging alcohol problems is far less resource consuming than a full scale alcohol problems resting with the employee. Related to the public health perspective, the use of alcohol interlocks may also save the society and the tax payers for significant amount of resources, today yearly spent on curing and reparation of alcohol related damages every year. With the aid of alcohol interlocks, the employee may have the option of receiving adequate support and help at an early stage before the alcohol problems have passed by the point of no return.

Any employee taken care of by this system, may also agree to follow the prevention and cure program. Based on the data and records from the AKAN model in use in Norwegian Companies, related to alcohol and drug abuse in the workplace, 80% of employees with emerging alcohol problems, being incorporated in the AKAN model for prevention of alcohol and drug problems, are in full working condition within one year after their entry into this agreement. The key here is the agreement between the companies, the unions, and the authorities to arrange for prevention and cure of emerging alcohol problems.

With the compulsory use of alcohol interlocks as presented in a coming EU-directive for commercial vehicles, companies and organizations are able to ensure customers, users and public opinion that their vehicles are being driven by sober drivers. Alcohol interlocks may then also be an element of companies alcohol and overall quality assurance policy. Such a wholistic approach requires determination and patience and has to be integrated step by step into normal operations.

Companies and organizations that procure or provide transportation will help to improve road safety through the use of alcohol interlocks to counteract drink driving. They will also bolster the customers view of the company, create a better working environment, and achieve competitive advantages for their own operations.

From being a punitive instrument for DUI, the alcohol interlock has moved into an area of general prevention use in commercial vehicles to enhance safety of deliverance of goods and wares. The alcohol interlock also is about to become an instrument of assurance of quality transport of persons in busses and taxis. The alcohol interlock may also enter into the field of public health precautions, as it may be utilized to reduce the burden of alcohol problems within transport companies, commercial drivers, and all other who will use a motor vehicle as part of their jobs. Expanded use of alcohol interlocks may benefit the employers, the employees and also the societies, as it may reduce the fear of being encountered by drunk drivers.

The extended use of alcohol interlocks may fulfill the Act of Human Rights in Traffic, by offering Freedom From Traffic-drugs.

This achievement will depend of the will and ability to make the right political decisions.