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## Technology tries to stay one step ahead of DWI cheaters

Offenders try using baloney, phony photos to defeat monitoring

Sue Vorenberg The New Mexican  
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Sue Vorenberg ALBUQUERQUE — Never underestimate the ingenuity — or stupidity — convicted drunken drivers will use to try to get around technologies designed to keep them from drinking.

If there's a way to beat the system, they'll find it. Fortunately, though, for those out to stop offenders, the mix of technologies available to keep drunken drivers in check continues to improve and diversify, said speakers at the Governor's Research Forum on DWI in Albuquerque last week.

"We're looking at what technologies can serve as viable alternatives to ignition interlock systems," said Rachel O'Connor, the DWI czar for Gov. Bill Richardson. "One problem here is that offenders can sign affidavits saying they don't have a car to avoid getting an ignition interlock, but we know that's not always true."

Speakers at the forum touted a host of methods the state can use to monitor convicted drunken drivers, whether they say they have cars or not.

To make sure it is the actual offender taking the test, many companies have recently added picture capabilities to the standard breath testers, both for home versions and for car ignition interlocks.

Home versions of the devices are often used to assure that those under investigation comply with bail criteria or to monitor convicted drunken-driving offenders as a condition of their release.

But knowing that a camera is clicking hasn't kept offenders from trying to sneak around the system. "We had a guy who took a picture of himself using the breathalyzer, then he put (the picture) in front of the camera and had somebody else blow into it," said Timothy Hallford, president of Adobe Interlock Sanctions & Solutions consulting services in Santa Fe.

The man's deception was uncovered, though, when Hallford looked through the photos and found the man was always wearing the same shirt and had the same expression on his face, he said.

Joe Johnson, whose company, BI Inc., makes a breath-testing gadget called the Sobriotor, said he doesn't find the notion that the man was caught surprising. But his and other companies try to stick in as many safeguards against things like that as they can, he said.

"Any piece of technology made by man can be defeated by man if you get creative enough," Johnson said. "Still, folks in these programs, they're not the sharpest tools in the box."

The Sobriotor uses voice recognition software and sensors that make sure a person's cheeks are in constant contact with the device during testing to assure the correct person is using it, he said.

Steve Talpins, who works on industry relations for SCRAM, an ankle or wrist bracelet device that tests a person for alcohol consumption through the skin every half-hour, said he's come across a few creative — if misguided — criminals in his time.

"The best one I saw was a man who stuck baloney in between our device and his skin, hoping to fool it," Talpins said. "He did that, why? Because baloney resembles the color of skin."

The device wasn't fooled.

A local technology, from an Albuquerque company that grew out of The University of New Mexico, also tests through skin but takes another tack — it does an arm scan to detect alcohol in the upper levels of skin.

That device, which costs \$10,000, is more expensive to start with than the other systems, which can involve daily monitoring costs that range from \$2 to \$15.

But since Jim McNally's TruTouch system has no recurring costs for daily monitoring, tests are basically free after purchase. His device — which is a bit larger than a typewriter and must sit in a set location — is better for prisons, juvenile facilities, work-release programs as well as for employers who want to make sure their employees aren't drinking, he said.

"This device is also smart enough to differentiate tissue from baloney," McNally added with a laugh.

With a variety of options, it's important to note there is no one-size-fits-all solution to getting offenders to comply, said Peter Borchert of the New Mexico Administrative Office of the Courts.

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Different solutions fit different types of offenders. An interlock or a home breath analyzer, which are relatively inexpensive monitoring systems, are fine for first offenders who mostly try to comply with the conditions of their bail or release, he said.

More expensive systems, like skin-monitoring devices, are also important though because they can keep more serious repeat offenders under constant supervision, he said.

The types of equipment can vary by agency and jurisdiction, and not every justice system in New Mexico is aware of all these options, he said. "There are parts of the state that don't know any of these technologies are available," Borchert said.

Information on the systems and DWI issues, he said, is available online at the New Mexico Transportation Safety Law Center Web site at [ipl.unm.edu/traf](http://ipl.unm.edu/traf).

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