

IDD-What Is It? Will It Work?

In most every job in America there is jargon, codes, abbreviations, lingo or acronyms used to make complicated and non-complicated ideas or concepts more manageable and easily identified during communication.

For example, in law enforcement locally we have the “B & E”, OWI or OMVWI, ATL, PBT, BOLO, ERT, APB, DOB, DOA, VIN, CIB and AKA as a small example of some of the jargon you might hear our law enforcement officers use.

Due to a new Wisconsin law, “Act 100” starting July 1 there will be yet another acronym added to the Wisconsin law enforcement officer’s vocabulary. That is “IDD”, an acronym for “ignition interlock device.” So you might ask, what is an ignition interlock device? Why is it now coming up on law enforcement’s radar? How might it affect me?”

The easiest way I can describe what an IDD is would be to say that it is a small sophisticated handheld breath testing device that is located inside a vehicle that is hooked up to the vehicle’s ignition system. A vehicle equipped with an IDD requires an individual to provide a sober breath sample in order to start the vehicle. It also requires more sober breaths to keep that same vehicle running smoothly.

One first good, “alcohol free” breath allows the ignition to start the vehicle. After 5 minutes more breaths are required to keep the vehicle running. After the first five minutes and randomly in 5-30 minute increments thereafter, the IDD will require even more breath tests. These tests are called “rolling re-tests”. These re-tests are designed to prevent a sober person from helping an intoxicated driver start their vehicle and then having that intoxicated driver operate their vehicle down the road un-noticed.

If there are 3 consecutive refusals to provide a breath test, or, the sample given exceeds the set point established, the vehicle’s horn will begin honking constantly and the emergency lights will start flashing. This will alert law enforcement personnel and other drivers operating their vehicle that there is a problem with the honking and flashing vehicle and/or operator.

One aspect of an IDD equipped vehicle to remember is that in Wisconsin the limit on an acceptable IDD breath has been set by the state at 0.02g/210L. So if the operator of an IDD equipped vehicle fails to blow into the IDD or the driver's breath is above the allowed limit the "rolling re-test" does not automatically shut the vehicle off and thus strand the operator in moving traffic. This would cause havoc on a busy highway or street and a traffic hazard known as a bottleneck would occur. Instead the vehicle that experiences a failed IDD test becomes a rolling billboard so to speak saying "there is a problem here." Citizens are told that should they encounter such a vehicle operating with its horn blaring and emergency lights flashing, they should call 911 and report the offending vehicle to law enforcement.

The question of why "ignition interlock devices" are now upon us also has to do with ACT 100 which starts July 1st. This new Wisconsin law greatly increases the importance and use of the IDD. **Under the new law the IDD device will be ordered by the sentencing judge for all vehicles owned and regularly driven by convicted repeat OWI offenders, driver's who refuse breath, blood or urine OWI tests and all convicted first offense OWI offenders who test .15 or over.** This is a major commitment and emphasis by the State of Wisconsin to the concept of ignition interlock device technology. The law also places the responsibility to get the IDD installed and the installation expense upon the convicted OWI offenders themselves.

The length of the IDD restriction on a person ranges from a minimum of 1 year to a maximum of the revocation period plus the actual imprisonment sentence. Also, during the period when a subject is under an IDD order their legal prohibited alcohol level in Wisconsin is .02. The law also creates a crime for failing to comply with the IDD court order and makes OWI first offense a crime if there is a child under 16 in the vehicle at the time of the stop.

So why did the State of Wisconsin make such a commitment to the IDD concept and what does it mean for you? The answer to this question is directly related to recent research regarding IDD and the continuing struggle to make us all safer on Wisconsin's roads. The research is showing that there is a significant drop in repeat drunk driving offenders if an IDD system is used. The state legislature seems to be trusting that this research is sound and may work in Wisconsin.

The hope is that the problems Wisconsin has had dealing with repeat drunk driving could be greatly improved with an emphasis placed on using the "ignition interlock devices" more often. My personal hope is that the research does hold up and that this new emphasis on the

acronym “IDD” becomes synonymous with motor vehicle safety and success. That would be a wonderful use for a new acronym in law enforcement.