

# **Evaluating the Effectiveness Of California's Ignition Interlock Program**

Interlocks Prevent  
1,900 Drunk Driving Incidents  
Per Month in California

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December 21, 2015

Since the California pilot program began, ignition interlocks have prevented vehicles from starting **over 1 million** times because alcohol was detected on the driver's breath.

## INTRODUCTION

Drunk driving continues to be the leading cause of death on our nation's roadways, despite new laws and heightened awareness of the tragic consequences of this completely preventable crime. Across the nation, 10,000 people die each year at the hands of a drunk driver. Over the past 30 years, 50,000 people have died in California because of drunk driving, and more than 1 million have been injured. California needs to do a better job of reducing repeat drunk driving offenses and preventing first-time offenses to save lives.

One of the most effective tools for preventing drunk driving is the use of an ignition interlock, a small device installed in the vehicle of a drunk driving offender. The driver must blow into the device before the vehicle will start. The car will not start if the driver's blood alcohol concentration is above a pre-set limit.

During the past five years, ignition interlocks have blocked drunk California drivers from starting their vehicles 126,436 times — an average of 1,945 per month.

California began a pilot program on July 1, 2010 to require ignition interlocks for all drunk driving offenders in four counties: Alameda, Los Angeles, Sacramento and Tulare. During the past five years, ignition interlock devices (IID) have blocked drunk California drivers from starting their vehicles 126,436 times — an average of 1,945 per month from July 2010 through November 2015. It's important to note that these were convicted drunk driving offenders who would have driven impaired again if they had not been stopped by an ignition interlock. IIDs also prevented vehicles from starting another 898,231 times because

alcohol was detected on the driver's breath. In all, interlocks prevented 1,024,667 drinking and driving incidents since July 2010.

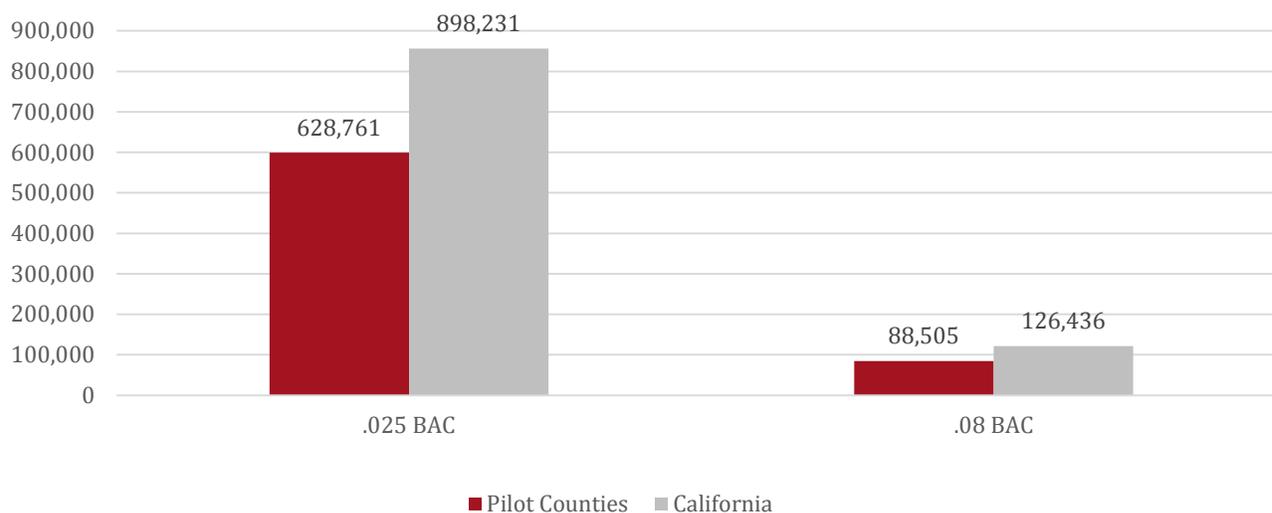
Mothers Against Drunk Driving® (MADD) believes ignition interlocks for all offenders, including after the first offense with an illegal blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of .08 or greater, is the best available DUI countermeasure available. As proven in California, IIDs protect thousands of innocent victims from drivers who otherwise would put lives at risk by drinking and driving. No other option available today — be it DUI court, treatment programs, license suspension, monitoring devices or twice-daily alcohol testing, alcohol ankle bracelets — can physically block an offender from operating his or her vehicle after consuming alcohol. That's why MADD believes every option for treatment and rehabilitation should include an ignition interlock requirement to allow the offender to safely travel without putting others or themselves at risk.

Based on the five-year results of California's pilot program, MADD urges California to join 25 other states requiring ignition interlocks after a drunk driving offense. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, AAA, every other major traffic safety organization and even segments of the alcohol industry have endorsed requiring ignition interlocks for all convicted drunk drivers.

MADD urges California to join 25 other states requiring ignition interlocks for everyone who seeks driving privileges after an offense. Segments of the alcohol industry have also endorsed this.

## CALIFORNIA'S IGNITION INTERLOCK PILOT PROGRAM

**1,024,667 Starts Prevented  
July 2010-November 2015**



Source: Source: Smart Start, LifeSafer, Guardian, Intoxalock, Draeger, Budget IID, Blow and Drive, ACS, and ADS

On July 1, 2010, California implemented the four-county pilot program as directed in Assembly Bill 91, requiring ignition interlocks for all convicted offenders in Alameda, Los Angeles, Sacramento and Tulare counties. Since then, 46.7 percent of convicted first offenders in the pilot counties have installed ignition interlocks. Installation rates for all offenders in the pilot counties rose to 42.4 percent — up from 2.5 before the pilot program began.

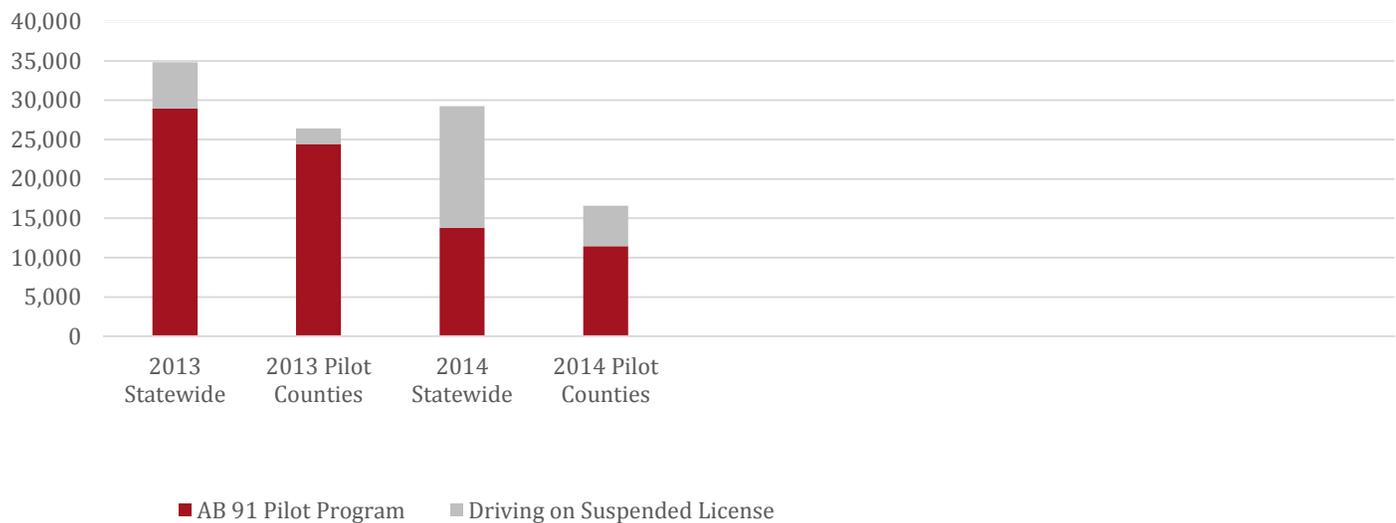
In 2013 alone, 57,990 drivers were driving with an ignition interlock-restricted license in California. 28,071, or 48 percent, were the result of the four-county pilot program.

To quantify the effect of ignition interlocks, data was collected from six major interlock providers in California. The compiled data show that ignition interlocks prevented offenders from drinking and driving over 1 million times since July 2010. Because research shows BAC levels continue to climb after alcohol is consumed, ignition interlock devices are set to detect .025 BAC levels. Servicing centers track all prevented starts, and provided data for stops for drivers with a .025 BAC and an illegal .08 BAC.

According to the compiled data, one in eight of the stops prevented — or 126,436 — involved a driver with a .08 BAC, the threshold for legal intoxication in all 50 states.

In 2013 alone, 57,990 drivers had an ignition interlock restricted license. According to the California Department of Motor Vehicles, 28,071 were the direct result of the pilot program. With a monthly average of 1,945 stops of California drivers with an illegal .08 BAC, it is likely AB 91 stopped drunk drivers in the pilot counties an average of nearly 1,000 times per month, sparing more families the devastating tragedies caused by drunk driving.

## Ignition Interlocks Issued Under Pilot Program vs. IIDs for Offenders Caught Driving on DUI Suspended License



Source: California Department of Motor Vehicles

The pilot program sought to reduce the number of DUI offenders who drive illegally via the use of interlock-restricted driving privileges. This allows offenders to continue work and family responsibilities — without time or geographic restrictions — while making it more likely they will drive legally. The program is administered by the DMV, which collects fees from interlock users.

The AB 91 pilot program likely stopped drunk drivers in four counties from starting their vehicles an average of nearly 1,000 times per month since July 2010.

The pilot was set to expire at the end of 2015. The California Legislature passed SB 61 by Senator Jerry Hill, which extends the pilot 18 months, until July 2017. Governor Jerry Brown signed the legislation into law on September 28, 2015. The California DMV is currently evaluating the effectiveness of ignition interlocks in the pilot counties.

Beyond the pilot program, California requires ignition interlocks for offenders who are caught driving on a suspended license that resulted from a DUI conviction. Judges may also order ignition interlocks for route-restricted licenses and for repeat offenders.

## DETERRENCE AND RECIDIVISM

An initial study of the pilot program in January 2015 by the California DMV, found that arrests and convictions had dropped in the pilot counties and across California. However, the authors noted that a more detailed review of individual cases of interlock use was necessary to assess whether interlock usage reduces repeat drunk driving offenses. Because repeat offenders receive longer suspensions — and therefore use interlocks for longer periods — the report concluded that not enough time had passed to evaluate how the pilot had affected recidivism rates.

Short of incarceration, which costs taxpayers more than \$100 per day, the only physical barrier to prevent an offender from driving drunk again is an ignition interlock.

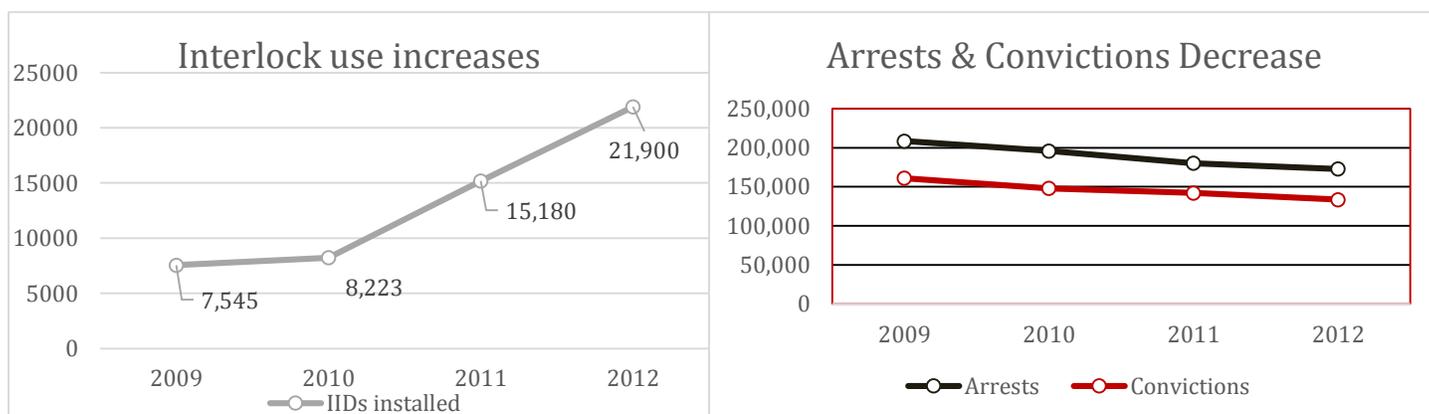
The study focused on the deterrent value of ignition interlocks to measure their effectiveness. While the authors did not connect interlocks with deterrence, they acknowledged that more public outreach to increase awareness of ignition interlocks might have helped. They also found limited research into the deterrent effect of ignition interlocks. Still, drunk driving arrests and convictions decreased during the pilot program, as did charges for driving on a suspended license and refusing to submit to a chemical test.

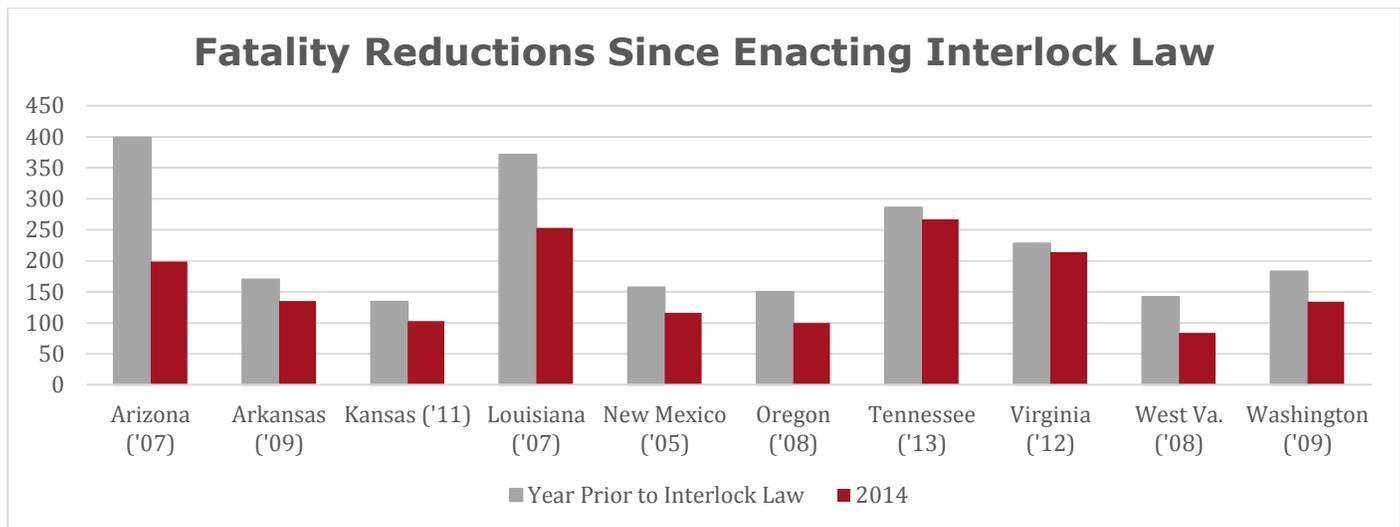
Deterrence is an important element in preventing drunk driving. A public awareness campaign in California publicizing the ignition interlock law could greatly improve general deterrence of drunk driving.

Unfortunately, people continue to make the dangerous — and often tragic — decision to drink and drive. Short of incarceration, which costs taxpayers more than \$100 per day, the only physical barrier to prevent an offender from driving drunk again is an ignition interlock. Any other program aimed at treating, monitoring and rehabilitating drunk driving offenders should include an ignition interlock component to ensure public safety while offenders address changing their drunk driving behavior.

New Mexico, the first state to pass an all-offender ignition interlock law, has the highest rate of interlock installations per capita in the nation. A National Highway Traffic Safety Administration study compared recidivism of multiple offenders with and without interlocks from 1999-2002. The study compared multiple offenders who were ordered by the courts to install interlocks to multiple offenders who were similarly prohibited from driving but not required to install interlocks. Multiple offender rearrest rates were 66 percent lower than the rearrest rates of those without interlock devices. During the full study period, including both the time on interlock and after interlock, the rearrest rate for those who installed the interlock was 22 percent lower than the rearrest rate for those without the interlock.

Another study of New Mexico’s ignition interlock device program found that recidivism rates were reduced by 75 percent for offenders in the program, compared to non-participating offenders. The study found that alcohol-involved crashes declined 31 percent between 2002 and 2007. (Roth)





Source: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, MADD research

The overwhelming majority of studies on ignition interlocks relate to recidivism and reductions in drunk driving fatalities — two key elements in measuring the impact on public safety. Fifteen peer-reviewed studies compiled by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention show a dramatic reduction — 67 percent — in recidivism when offenders with ignition interlocks are compared to offenders whose licenses were suspended. Even after the interlock is removed, offenders who used them are 39 percent less likely to reoffend (Marques 2010).

Similar results in California — where 882 people were killed in drunk driving crashes in 2014 — would save more than 400 lives per year.

According to a Washington State study, recidivism dropped among “simple” first offenders by 12 percent two years after they removed the device. Simple offenders were those with a .08 to .14 BAC. The authors noted that only one-third of the simple offenders installed an interlock. Had all of these offenders installed, recidivism could have been reduced by 50 percent, the study found. In addition, the authors wrote, late-night vehicle crashes were reduced by 8 percent. (McCartt, Leaf, Farmer & Eichelberger, 2013).

The study also recommends that jurisdictions seek to increase interlock installment rates and reconsider plea agreements that reduce drunk driving charges without requiring an ignition interlock.

It is also important to note that other states with all-offender ignition interlock laws have experienced sustained annual decreases in drunk driving fatalities. For example, the number of drunk driving fatalities in Arizona has dropped by 50 percent since passing an all-offender ignition interlock law in 2007, according to data from NHTSA’s 2014 Fatal Analysis Reporting System (FARS). In 2013, based on the FARS data, the decrease in Arizona was 45 percent, illustrating the continued progress of one of the oldest all-offender ignition interlock laws in the U.S. These decreases are unheard of in traffic safety, and similar results in California — where 882 people were killed in drunk driving crashes in 2014 — would save more than 400 lives per year.

## LICENSE SUSPENSION

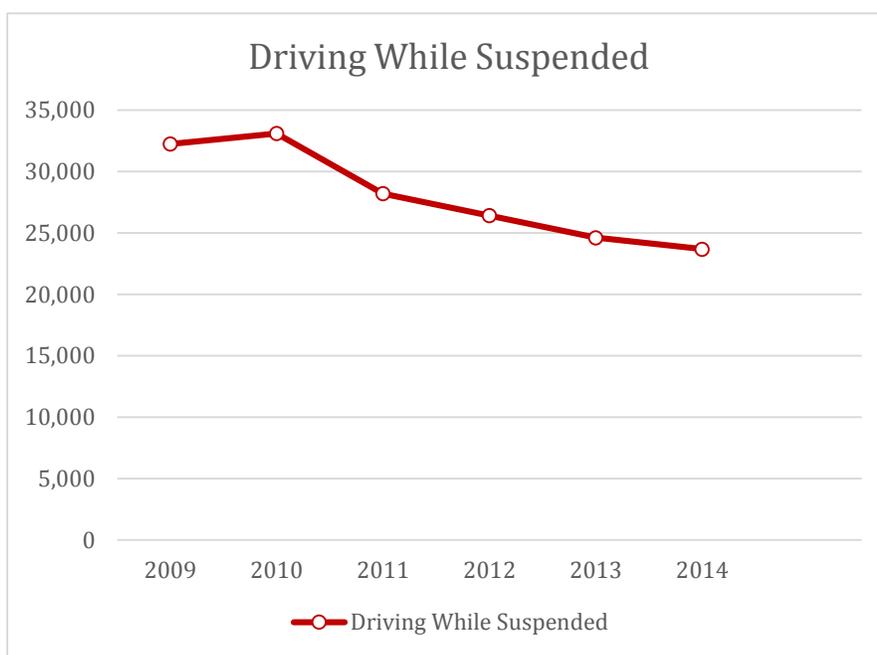
Prior to the advancement of ignition interlock technology, license revocations were the favored response to a drunk driving offense. Today, however, studies show that 50 to 75 percent of drunk driving offenders continue to drive even after losing their license. The safest way to ensure that these drivers are sober when they get behind the wheel is to monitor their driving behavior — and stop them if they attempt to start a vehicle while intoxicated.

Unfortunately, thousands of drunk driving offenders in California violate the terms of their DUI license suspension every year. According to the DMV, there were 23,690 violations in 2014, although the agency cautions that the numbers may account for multiple charges for the same driver. Even if the number of violations represents just half of the drivers involved, California still would have had nearly 12,000 people driving during a DUI license suspension in 2014.

According to the California DMV, there were 23,690 violations for driving on a DUI suspension in 2014.

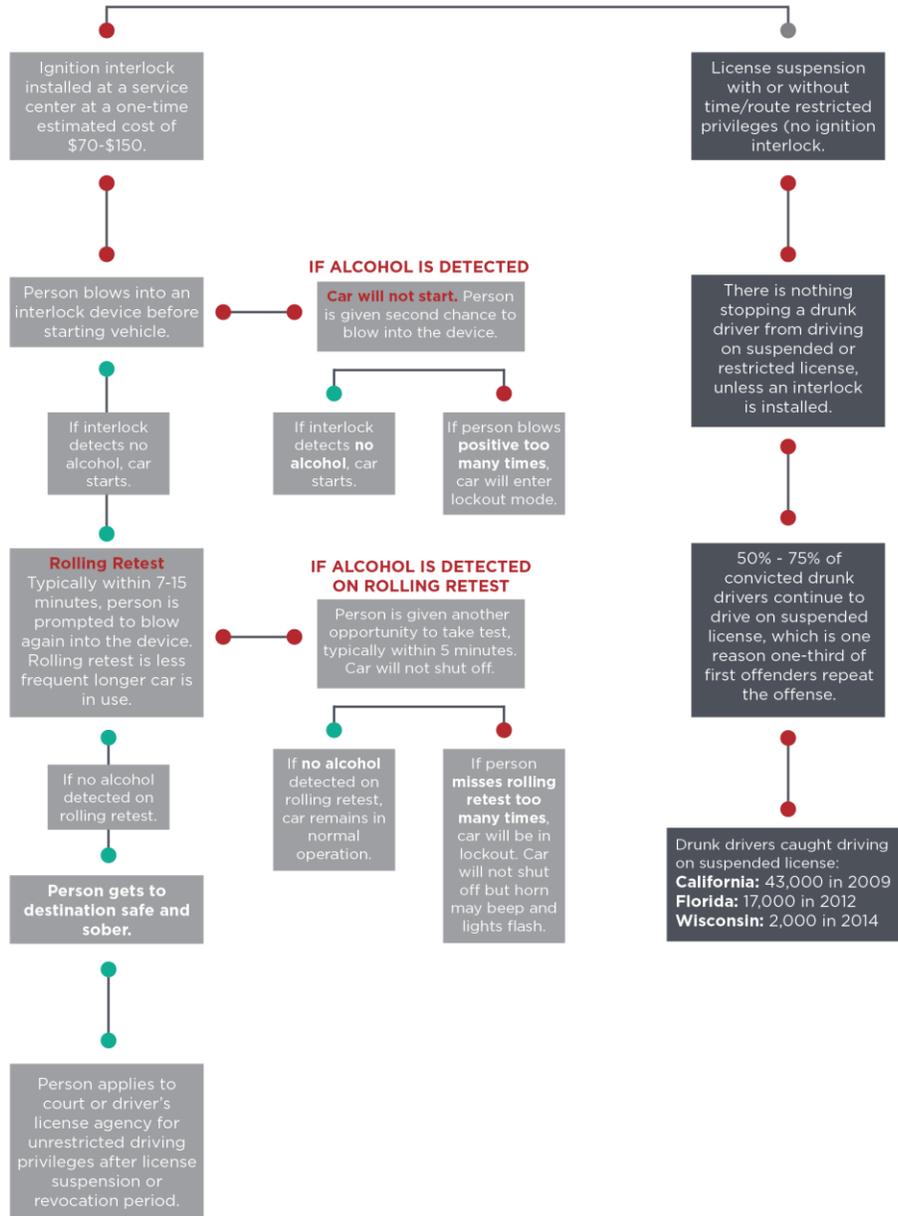
While the number of Californians driving on a DUI suspended license has steadily decreased since 2009, the number California drivers ordered to use an interlock after being caught driving on a suspended license is going up. Under current California law, convicted DUI offenders who lose their driving privileges are ordered to use an ignition interlock if they are caught driving during the suspension.

According to the California DMV, 15,439 people were ordered to use an ignition interlock in 2014 for driving on a DUI suspended license. In fact, more people were ordered to use an ignition interlock for driving while suspended in 2014 than were ordered to use the device under AB 91, the pilot program. This increase in interlocks for driving unmonitored on a suspended license adds urgency to ensuring that all DUI offenders use an interlock — instead of losing their driving privileges — to prevent repeat offenses and protect the public while the offender changes his or her driving behavior.



Source: California Department of Motor Vehicles

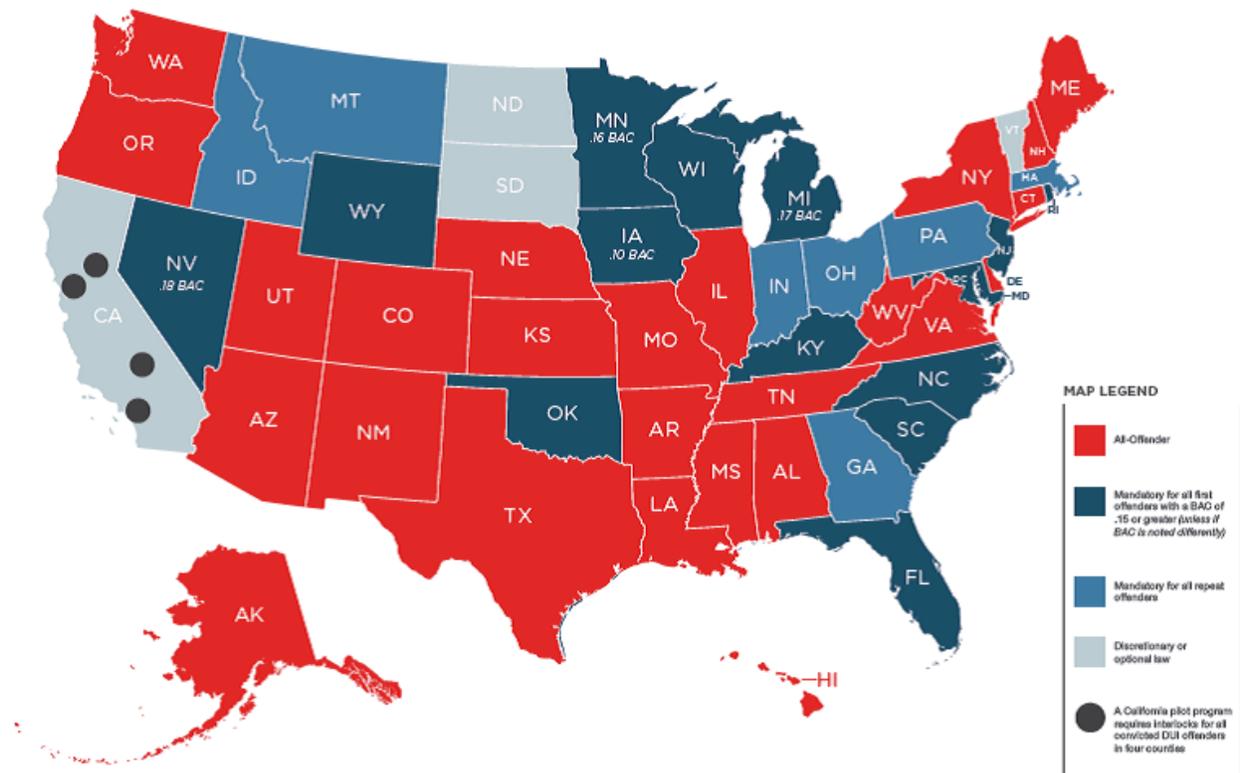
# Ignition Interlock VS License Suspension After DUI



People who use an interlock are less likely to reoffend. Compared to license suspension alone, interlocks reduce repeat offenses by 67% while the device is installed and 39% after the device is removed. Compliance Based Removal could help decrease repeat offenses even more.

MADD supports ignition interlocks for ALL apprehended drunk drivers. Interlocks accomplish what license suspension and other monitoring technologies do not — separate drinking from driving.

- **Interlock Service Center:** Person must get interlock serviced every 30 days.
- **Lockout Mode:** If person blows positive for alcohol too many times or misses a rolling test, device may need to be taken to get serviced sooner than 30 days.
- **Extra time on interlock possible.** The interlock service center may report any violations, too many positive blows or missed rolling retests to a monitoring agency which may result in extra time on interlock if the state has a **Compliance Based Removal** aspect to the interlock law. Many states require offenders to show proof of installation and/or compliance with the interlock order to the court/driver's license agency in order to have device removed.



## IGNITION INTERLOCK FOR ALL OFFENDERS

MADD launched its Campaign to Eliminate Drunk Driving in 2006 to push the nation toward a day when there will be no more victims of this violent crime. The Campaign’s three-pronged approach emphasizes high-visibility law enforcement, development of advanced vehicle technology to passively detect if a driver is drunk, and passing laws in every state to require all drunk driving offenders to install ignition interlocks.

Combined with enforcement efforts, ignition interlocks are the best proven countermeasure available to stop drunk driving. Today, 25 states require ignition interlocks for all offenders. Every state in the nation — including California — requires the devices for repeat offenders and/or those with a BAC of .15 and above.

States that require ignition interlocks for all offenders have experienced significant reductions in drunk driving fatalities. For example, drunk driving fatalities have decreased by 50 percent in Arizona since its law passed in 2007. Drunk driving fatalities in West Virginia have dropped 40 percent since 2008, and other states, such as Oregon, Washington and Hawaii have experienced reductions of 25 to 33 percent.

Ignition interlocks not only protect the public and would-be drivers from the immediate risk of drunk driving, they also help rehabilitate the offender as he or she learns sober driving. The devices complement other rehabilitative programs by ensuring drivers remain sober when driving to and from treatment and while carrying out their daily responsibilities for family, work and/or school. This cannot be accomplished by simply revoking driving privileges.

## PAYING FOR IGNITION INTERLOCKS

Offenders pay for installation and maintenance of the devices, which costs an average of \$2.50 per day — less than buying a beer at most establishments. Some states also collect a fee for an interlock-restricted license, which is designed to offset administrative costs of administering the program. Federal funds also are available as incentive grants to states that pass all-offender ignition interlock laws.

Help is available for drunk driving offenders who cannot afford the cost of an ignition interlock. Under the four-county pilot program:

- A person at 100 percent of the federal poverty level (\$23K annually family of four) is responsible for 10 percent of the IID cost. The IID provider absorbs the rest.
- A person at 101 to 200 percent of the federal poverty level (\$47K annually family of four) is responsible for 25 percent of the IID cost. The IID provider absorbs the rest.
- A person at 201 to 300 percent of the federal poverty level (\$70K annually family of four) is responsible for 50 percent of the IID cost. The IID provider absorbs the rest.
- All other offenders are responsible for 100 percent of the cost of the ignition interlock device.

In addition, ignition interlock centers are accessible throughout the state of California, where 17 manufacturers provide devices at over 350 state-certified ignition interlock installation centers (see [madd.org/interlocks](http://madd.org/interlocks) interactive map below).



Source: MADD Research

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In February 2014, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration released a report, "Ignition Interlocks — What You Need To Know." The report found that when appropriately used, ignition interlocks prevent repeat drunk driving among repeat and first-time offenders. "Ignition interlocks permit offenders to retain or regain legal driving status, thus enabling them to maintain employment and manage familial and court-ordered responsibilities that require driving," the report said. "This is a particularly relevant benefit, as many offenders without interlocks drive illegally on a suspended/revoked license, often after drinking. The installation of an interlock on the offender's vehicle reduces the probability of this occurring, thereby improving public safety."

The report went on to say that the majority of offenders surveyed believe ignition interlock sanctions are fair and effective in reducing drunk driving. "Family members believed that ignition interlocks provided a level of reassurance that an offender was not driving while impaired and reported a generally positive experience and impact on the offender's drinking habits," the report stated.

With clear evidence that ignition interlocks are already preventing hundreds of thousands of drunk driving offenders in California from getting behind the wheel drunk, and over one million attempts to drive with any alcohol, the California Legislature should expand its four-county ignition interlock pilot program statewide, protecting all citizens of California.

California's statewide law should require all offenders to install an ignition interlock for at least six months immediately after the offense or for the remainder of current license suspension periods, and without a lengthy license suspension.

- Ignition interlocks protect the public and allow the offender to carry out daily responsibilities and, if needed, attend rehabilitation programs.
- Studies show ignition interlocks are 67 percent more effective than license suspension in preventing recidivism.
- States with similar laws have reduced drunk driving fatalities by up to 50 percent. If California were to achieve the same results, 400 lives could be saved every year.
- No other program puts technology between a would-be drunk driver and his or her ability to drive.
- 50 to 75 percent of drunk driving offenders continue to drive on a suspended license.