

# Faster Tests of DWI Suspects May Be Coming

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Mandatory ignition interlocks in every car may be a long way off, but an Albuquerque biotech hopes to tap into renewed interest in the ongoing nationwide fight against drunken driving.

InLight Solutions develops non-invasive glucose testing devices for diabetic patients. The company aims to use its proprietary technology, which involves shooting a beam of light through human tissue to measure chemicals, for a similar system that would detect the presence of alcohol.

Such a device would be more accurate, faster and easier to use than Breathalyzer technology, says InLight chief operating officer Jim McNally.

Favorable test results and an increased nationwide crackdown on drunken driving may help bring the firm's second planned product line to fruition earlier than planned, he said.

"A small clinical study demonstrated that our non-invasive technology compared directly to state-of-the-art breath devices," says McNally, who recently presented the system to the National Safety Committee on Alcohol and Other Drugs during a Dallas meeting of forensic scientists.

### Fewer limitations

And, he says, InLight's alcohol-monitoring device doesn't share the limitations of breath-testing systems, such as false results from gum, mints or breath freshener and requirements

that a suspect breathe a certain way.

To use the device, a test subject would place his or her forearm on a sensor on top of the device, which is about twice the size of a shoe box. A beam of light is then passed through the person's skin, and collected as it exits. Sensors determine the presence and amount of alcohol and results are given on a small screen.

"Basically, you put your skin on it and have results in one minute," McNally says.

Linda Atkinson, executive director of the Albuquerque-based DWI Resource Center, says such a system could replace tests like the industry standard Intoxilyzer 5000, which is used by the state. Those systems can't be easily transported, she says, so suspects must first fail a roadside visual assessment, then be transported to the nearest breath or blood testing device.

### Portable

"A lot of the problem is shortage of manpower," she says. "If an arrest takes up to an hour, it lets others go as they process that offender," she says.

McNally says Inlight is looking for distribution partners that could help the 12-year-old firm commercialize the device, and is beginning the process of getting U.S. Department of Transportation and state toxicology department approval. He hopes to have the first on the street within 24 months.

"About 33 states are actively raising through legislation more testing, more money and lower alcohol level standards," he says.

New Mexico State Highway Patrol Lt. Robert San Roman says drunken driving arrests in the

state went up 26.5 percent in 2003 to 5,687, thanks, in part, to aggressive moves by Gov. Bill Richardson's administration to curb the problem.

McNally notes that within a few years, the device could be adapted to vehicle interlock systems, which are required for some repeat offenders. Recent legislation in Santa Fe proposed such devices be included in all cars sold in the state within a few years. The measure failed in the final day of the session.

### Catching product wave

InLight isn't alone in trying to develop an alternative to breath testing. Several firms, like Ontario, Calif.-based LifePoint, are developing systems that would perform drug and alcohol tests using saliva samples. Though some have Department of Transportation approval, they have yet to achieve wide distribution.

"It's still a maybe, but we're excited about the possibilities," McNally says, noting that he estimates a \$100 million annual market for alcohol testing devices.

Such a device would be a second product line for InLight, which is developing the glucose testing system for its largest customer, Johnson & Johnson. Founded in 1992 as Rio Grande Medical Technologies, the firm employs about 50.

