

- JOBS
- AUTOS
- REAL ESTATE
- RENTALS
- CLASSIFIED
- YELLOW PAGES

news

Local News

- ↳ Ahwatukee
- ↳ Chandler
- ↳ Gilbert
- ↳ Glendale
- ↳ Mesa
- ↳ North Valley
- ↳ Northwest Valley
- ↳ Peoria
- ↳ Pinal County
- ↳ Phoenix - Central
- ↳ Phoenix - Northeast
- ↳ Scottsdale
- ↳ Sun Cities
- ↳ Surprise
- ↳ SW Valley
- ↳ Tempe

National News

World News

The Buzz

Politics

- ↳ John McCain
- ↳ Legislature
- ↳ Presidential Race

AZ Green Living

Data Central

Law & Order

- ↳ Crime reports
- ↳ Sexual Offenders Database
- ↳ Amber Alerts

Watchdog

Border News

Education

Editorials/Op-Ed

- ↳ aZtalk Forums
- ↳ Benson Cartoons
- ↳ Columnists

Arizona Republic

- ↳ Print Edition

12 News

Obituaries

Special Reports

En Español

- ↳ La Voz
- ↳ Estados Unidos
- ↳ Política
- ↳ Latinoamérica
- ↳ Internacional

news

Print Article Email Article Most Popular Change Type Size

Breath analyzers gain fans with approach of New Year parties

Kellie Hwang
The Arizona Republic
Dec. 29, 2007 12:00 AM

As the biggest drinking holiday approaches, so do concerns about Arizona's DUI laws.

While some people are securing designated drivers and reserving town cars for the New Year's parties that will stretch from tonight through Monday, others are taking safety into their own hands.

Personal breath analyzers are becoming popular items, say online and Valley businesses that sell the blood-alcohol-level-measuring devices.

"A lot of people come in asking specifically for the product, and we have a hard time keeping it on the shelves," said Christina Naylor, manager at Brookstone's Scottsdale Fashion Square location, where breath analyzers cost \$50.

This is the first holiday season since stricter DUI laws went into effect Sept. 19. For convicted DUI offenders, that means a required ignition-interlock device on their cars that test for alcohol consumption. The device, which was previously required only for extreme-DUI offenders, forces the driver to blow into it before the car can be started. If the driver's alcohol level is above the legal limit of 0.08 percent, the car will not start.

Among other changes, those with a blood-alcohol level at or greater than 0.2 percent will have to spend 45 days in jail, pay a fine and have their license suspended for 90 days upon conviction.

The new law, plus the usual increase in police presence for the holidays, means people are even more aware of the consequences of drinking and driving. So some are turning to personal breathalyzers to help assess their levels of intoxication.

The machines can cost between \$25 and \$250.

"Now we sell them to everybody," said Keith Nothacker, president of San Francisco-based KHN Solutions, which manufactures the BACtrack breath analyzers and runs breathalyzer.net.

In 2006, more than 2,600 people were arrested for DUI during the holiday campaign, which runs from Thanksgiving through New Year's Eve, according to the Governor's Office of Highway Safety.

Michael Hegarty of the Office of Highway Safety said personal breath analyzers can make drinkers more aware of their consumption.

"They can be good indicators, but not a final determination," he said. "They can help people gauge and understand where they are at. . . . People don't understand how alcohol affects them."

Breath analyzers measure the amount of alcohol in a person's blood by measuring the concentration of alcohol in a person's breath.

As blood flows through the lungs, the alcohol in the bloodstream moves across the membranes of the lung's air sacs into the breath.

The concentration of alcohol in the breath corresponds to that in the blood, Nothacker explained.

Police and personal breath analyzers work similarly, but personal breath analyzers results are not admissible in court. Neither is 100 percent accurate.

"There is no safe level of alcohol consumption and then driving," Nothacker said.

Most consumer breath analyzers utilize a semiconductor sensor to detect alcohol, while professional ones such as those used by police departments have a fuel-cell sensor.

The latter are often used for evidential testing and are more accurate than consumer versions, according to Nothacker. Professional devices also can read higher alcohol levels and work in seconds.

Michael DeFine, a DUI defense lawyer in Peoria, advises not to waste money on breath analyzers: "You might as well use that money toward a cab."

MORE ON THIS TOPIC

DUI facts

Effective Sept. 19:

• All convicted DUI offenders must have an ignition interlock device installed.

Other DUI deterrent tactics:

• Posting DUI offenders' mugs on stopdulaz.com, billboards and public-service announcements.

DUI penalties

(.08 percent to .14 percent):

- \$1,250 fine.
- 10 days in jail.
- 90 days suspended license.

• Interlock for one year.

Extreme DUI penalties

(.15 percent to .19 percent):

- \$2,500 fine.
- 30 days in jail.
- 90 days suspended license.

• Interlock for one year.

Super-extreme

DUI penalties

(.2 percent or higher):

- \$2,750 fine.
- 45 days in jail.
- 90 days suspended license.
- Interlock for 18 months.

Source: Governor's Office of Highway Safety

New Year's revelers face tougher DUI law
Girls' night out led to Tent City
Task force arrested 8,971 in '07
Breath analyzers gain fans with approach of New Year parties

MOST READ STORIES

Phoenix man dies after car hits freeway wall
Man sought in shooting of 6
Reclusive judge thrust into spotlight
Cities consider policies for employees convicted of DUI
[more >>](#)