

Pottsville firm uses technology to fight drunk driving

In addition to tools used to stop DUI, DTS branching out into technology that thwarts identity theft

By Dave Gardner

The battle in Pennsylvania against alcohol abuse and drunk driving is receiving a major contribution from Driving Technology Systems Inc. (DTS) in Pottsville.

The company, now in business for one year, specializes in the marketing and sale of alcohol protection technology that can stop the use of a motor vehicle by an intoxicated person.

Also distributed by DTS are identity and age verification systems; preliminary breath analyzers for police and the workplace; equipment to calibrate devices used to protect against alcohol use; and magnetic signage.

With three employees, DTS is owned by Michael Rader, president and Timothy Rader, vice-president.

Michael says that the Rader family has a long history of working to curb alcohol abuse, and that they take the matter of personal responsibility very seriously.

"Our father, Louis has served as manager of Pennsylvania's Alcohol Safety program, so we have heard for years about the need to make responsible decisions when a person drinks," says Michael. "We are thankful that opportunities like this exist to protect the community — with highway safety a priority — and we feel strongly about these types of products."

Michael gained experience within the industry during the time he worked for National Interlock Systems in Harrisburg, where he specialized in driving under the influence (DUI) prevention systems. Timothy's experience was gained through a position with the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board where he promoted alcohol education.

To stay current with rapidly improving technology, DTS maintains quality relationships throughout the alcohol control industry. Firms in Baltimore, Harrisburg and Woodbury, N.Y. manufacture the various products distributed by DTS.

Curbing abuse

The automobile ignition interlock system distributed by DTS is known as the Determinator. A specialist can officially install the unit, approximately the size of a palm pilot, when an individual has received two or more Pennsylvania DUI convictions. More than 12,000 people in the state find themselves in this situation annually.

If the individual chooses the Determinator, they receive a special license instead of a full suspension and the unit is installed in their car.

To start the vehicle, they must blow into the interlock unit, which will measure their blood alcohol level and subsequently only allow the vehicle to start if the measurement is below the legal limit of .08 percent. As the vehi-



cle is operated, the driver must continue to blow into the unit at random intervals as the unit demands, or the car will be disabled.

Another technology distributed by DTS is the Alcotector. This unit is a tool that can be used by police or workplace supervisors as a preliminary breath tester to measure blood alcohol levels.

While the unit is currently rated only for field sobriety tests, Michael says that it soon will be approved by the Pennsylvania legal system to provide evidence in court trials.

DTS is also the North Eastern United States distributor for Intelli-Check Inc., a manufacturer of ID verification systems used in bars, restaurants, airports, financial institutions, and convenience stores. The systems allow police to read and store information from the identification card a patron may present. Falsified cards are immediately identified, and the recovered information can later be downloaded and printed.

"With this system, I once saw a Massachusetts driver's license identified that contained the magnetic information from a New York card," says Michael. "While the cardholder had obviously spent considerable effort and money to obtain the fake ID, the system instantly picked it up when they tried to use it."

DTS also distributes technology that is used to test and calibrate alcohol detection equipment. This involves a solution that can be mixed to generate alcohol vapor. Another new DTS product is reflective magnetic signage for police vehicles so that they can display official messages.

"We have many ideas, but our biggest challenge for this business is obtaining working capital for growth," adds Michael. "While we're dedicated to the field we're in, we also understand that DTS is a business, and we handle it as such. This need for capital puts us in the same spot most small businesses are in, but so far were on our way to being established." ■

DUI —

How much is too much?

The legal blood alcohol limit is .08 percent. This legal limit was changed from .10 percent in September, 2003. The legislation that changed the legal limit also created a three-tiered approach to drunk driving enforcement based on the blood-alcohol content.

The tiers are .08 to less than .10; .10 to less than .16; and .16 and above.

Criminal and civil penalties increase with the increasing BAC level.

For example, drivers who have a BAC of .16 percent or higher, as well as repeat offenders, will be required to undergo a complete drug and alcohol assessment and undergo treatment if ordered as a condition of punishment, or else face longer jail sentences.

Fines also are increased for repeat offenders and tripled for BAC levels of .16 percent of higher.

The effects of alcohol:

■ BAC of .01 percent to .05 percent
Some-to-great loss of judgment and

coordination, thinking dulled, changes in mood and behavior. A BAC of 0.02 percent at many U.S. companies will require that an employee be relieved of duty for 24 hours and at 0.04 they will be fired. In an organization with a "zero-tolerance" policy in regard to alcohol use, terminations occur at 0.001 percent.

■ BAC of .05 percent to .08 percent
(Everyone has reached this point after just one or two drinks.)

Functioning ability definitely impaired. Walking, speech, and hand movements clumsy. Blurred, split, or tunnel vision may occur. Judgment and equipment operating ability impaired. Chance of accident is greatly increased — by as much as 300 percent or more.

■ BAC of .08 percent and over
(Some people reach this point by their second drink and all have by their third or fourth drink.)

Functioning and judgment very seriously affected. Responses greatly slowed. Behavior greatly affected. Very high risk of accident. In most U.S. states — including Pennsylvania — with a BAC of .08 percent or higher, you will be arrested if driving a car. ■

Source: OHS Health & Safety Services

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