



High-Tech Ankle Bracelets Used To Deter Repeat Drunk Driving Offenders

By Britni de la Cretaz 08/18/17

Judges and attorneys in Jefferson County, Kentucky are hopeful that the high-tech device will reduce recidivism and save lives.

A county in Kentucky is trying a new method to deter repeat drunk driving offenders. A high-tech ankle bracelet, part of the Continuous Alcohol Monitoring Program (CAMP), tests for alcohol in the perspiration of the person wearing it, at regular intervals. Jefferson County, where Louisville is located, plans to train judges and legal professionals this week about the monitoring system and how it works.



The CAMP system transmits the results of the sweat test to a monitoring company, which sends them to the court. If there is alcohol in the person's sweat, the court can decide how to proceed in terms of probation or other penalties for the offender. SCRAM Systems, which manufactures the bracelets, markets them as designed "for high-risk, hardcore DUI and alcohol offenders" on its website.

Judges and attorneys in Jefferson County are hopeful that this system could reduce recidivism and save lives. The continuous alcohol monitoring protocol was recognized in 2010 by the National Association of Drug Court Professionals as a technology for monitoring offenders in DWI Courts.

According to the Courier-Journal, 600,000 people in the United States and five other countries have been monitored with the sensors, and 19 Kentucky counties have already monitored 1,700 people with them. The company reports that 99.3% of people wearing the ankle bracelets don't drink alcohol.

Nationally, SCRAM says 77% of those monitored complete it with no violations for drinking or tampering. In order for the system to work, the person wearing it must be within 30 feet of the base station when the test is taken so test data can download. The bracelet cannot be submerged in water, and showers are the only approved bathing method while wearing the CAMP bracelet.

District Judge Stephanie Pearce Burke also sees the ankle bracelets as a way for defendants to prove their sobriety to the courts. "Defense lawyers say their client hasn't been drinking, but judges never know," Burke told the Courier-Journal. "And we don't really want to be wrong."

Monitoring programs are also being offered in many jurisdictions as alternatives to incarceration, which many people see as good for the community. It can allow community members to remain involved and present with their jobs and families, and can allow people to avoid the trauma of incarceration.

Families Against Mandatory Minimums (FAMM) is one organization that speaks out in support of alternative sentencing, which it says can save taxpayer money and strengthen communities, as well as reduce crime in the long run.