

Mobile biometric breathalyzer speeds sobriety testing

By Kathleen Hickey Jan 11, 2017



Mobile biometric breathalyzers are dramatically increasing the efficiency of Massachusetts' probation officers monitoring low-risk offenders mandated not to drink alcohol.

The handheld, wireless, portable breathalyzer identifies probationers using facial recognition technology. The software, which the company calls Automated Facial Intelligence, digitally maps the facial features of the offenders as they take the test and matches those features to baseline images stored within the system, ensuring the person taking the breath test is the probationer.

Probationers receive verbal instructions on when to take the test, which can be at random or at set times. The device (SCRAM Remote Breath) wirelessly sends the test results, photo and GPS location of the probationer to the Massachusetts' Electronic Monitoring Center. The probation officer is alerted if the probationer fails the test. If it's a serious violation, the police are also notified.

Stationary breathalyzers have been on the market for years. But the devices could not test alcohol use when the subjects were at work, school or elsewhere. The systems also required offenders to go to the police station to get tested or use a stationary test at home that required officers to match photos with offender profiles.

"I don't have to go to his house, He doesn't have to come to me," Senior Probation Officer Frank Audy told, 7 News Boston . "I get printed test results three seconds after the test is done and sent to my computer."

According to the SCRAM website, the facial recognition software reduces manual review of photos by 90 to 95 percent.

About 700 people on probation are currently monitored in Massachusetts with SCRAM, according to 7 News Boston. Approximately 430 devices are in use, up from 300 last year, the Massachusetts Court System said.

SCRAM Remote Breath replaced the Sobriotor, voice recognition software accessed via a telephone landline.

Daniel Pires, statewide manager of electronic monitoring, said the new solution is more secure, efficient and mobile friendly as it has a cellular communications component. It's also less expensive than Sobriotor, reported telegram.com.

Probationers also don't seem to mind. "In talking to certain people, they'd say they don't want to remove it because it's something that was keeping them sober," Pires said.

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