

HAWAII NEWS

DUI repeat offenders might have to wear alcohol monitors

[Star-Advertiser Staff](#) November 16, 2018 Updated November 15, 2018 10:33pm



(Video: Craig T. Kojima)

The Honolulu prosecutor's office held a press conference to introduce a new device from SCRAM systems that will monitor a person's alcohol level. The device will be piloted by the courts in Honolulu.

Courts statewide might soon require repeat drunken drivers to wear alcohol monitoring ankle bracelets aimed at reducing the dangers of drunken driving on Hawaii's roadways.

"This new monitoring device will provide another tool to help combat drunk driving and keep our communities safer," said Honolulu First Deputy Prosecutor Chasid Sapolu at a news conference held Thursday at the prosecutors' office in downtown Honolulu. The ankle bracelets have already been in use for the past four years at the DWI (driving while impaired) Court of Honolulu District Court.

Consultants said judges will have the discretion on ordering the use of the bracelets for repeat drunken drivers.

A judge can order an offender to wear the device as part of a sentence or an offender who is considered a “repeat intoxicated driver,” said Brooks Baehr, spokesman of the Honolulu prosecutor’s office.

Retired Judge Joseph Michael Kavanaugh, former senior director of the National Center for DWI Courts, is one of the consultants for SCRAM Systems.

“We need to do everything we can to bring the number of DWI fatalities and crashes and injuries down to zero. That ought to be our ultimate goal,” Kavanaugh said.

The bracelet is known as a transdermal alcohol monitoring ankle unit, said SCRAM Systems regional sales manager Moses Leasiolagi.

The device loads information nightly to a local call center via Wi-Fi, cellular, ethernet or landline where agents review the readings and differentiate between environmental and consumed alcohol.

Once alcohol is detected, Leasiolagi said, a report is immediately sent to a designated court official.

The technology also detects whether a wearer is tampering with the device.

He said the unit has been found to be a deterrent for alcohol use for habitual intoxicated drivers. Approximately 99.3 percent of people who are wearing the device on any given day are completely sober 24 hours a day.

The technology has been used to monitor about 660,000 high-risk drunken driving and alcohol offenders throughout the U.S.

The program was initiated in 2003.

Leasiolagi said the program is completely funded via costs imposed on offenders. Costs of the alcohol monitoring are estimated at \$135 a week.



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