



**Department of Safety,  
City and County of Denver, CO**

*Major Metropolitan Area Utilizes SCRAM  
as Critical Component of Established  
Electronic Monitoring Program*

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*Marilyn Rosenberg,  
Director of the Electronic  
Monitoring Program,  
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## The Problem

Denver is nicknamed the “Mile-High City” because its official elevation is one mile above sea level. In fact, one spot on the west steps of the State Capitol building is exactly at 5,280 feet. In 2006, the population of the City and County of Denver was 567,000, making it more populous than the entire neighboring state of Wyoming.

While known for its health-conscious residents, the City also has its challenges with alcohol abuse. Twice over the past few years, a national magazine named Denver the “Most Dangerously Drunk” metropolitan city in the United States based on criteria such as annual death rates due to alcoholic liver disease, drunk driving arrests, and the percentage of fatal accidents involving intoxicated motorists. Several factors may contribute to this situation. Denver brews more beer (80 varieties) than any other U.S. city, and has one of the largest downtown areas in the U.S. with a bustling nightlife and hundreds of bars and restaurants in LoDo (lower Downtown). Denver is also a city of sports enthusiasts that eight professional teams call home. And although Denver is one of the most highly-educated cities in the country, 15% of its residents are currently below the poverty line.

To address its alcohol offenders, the City has a dedicated Electronic Monitoring (EM) Program, which started in 1991. “Before that, the prevailing philosophy was to put people in jail, and wearing an ankle bracelet or something similar was considered a slap on the wrist rather than a viable alternative,” says Marilyn Rosenberg, Director of the Electronic Monitoring Program for the City and County of Denver. “But that mindset has definitely shifted. Now, EM is viewed as a way to give offenders a chance to move out of the system, get the help they need, and go forward with their lives.”

## The SCRAM Program

SCRAM® (Secure Continuous Remote Alcohol Monitor) has been a key component of the City’s EM program since July 2004. The City started with 50 units in a pilot program, and now has over 200 units in inventory. The City directly manages its SCRAM program, and is one of the largest major metropolitan area users of SCRAM.

In Denver, SCRAM is employed in a variety of ways – for first-time DUI offenders with a high BAC (>0.15) to repeat DUI offenders, domestic situations, or other crimes where alcohol is involved. “How SCRAM is used depends on the decision of the judge who is presiding over a particular case, or by the recommendation of the probation officer to the judge,” says Rosenberg.

One of the roles of her department is to educate City judges and probation officers on the merits of using SCRAM, and how it can be beneficial in helping them continuously monitor offenders and better assess how to help get them out of the system. “We’ve been working to educate judges about SCRAM, especially how it works so well in combination with treatment,” says Rosenberg. “It’s a terrific tool to help offenders get started in treatment. It helps them create an awareness of the magnitude of their problem, and is a strong drinking deterrent.”

In fact, Rosenberg states, “while our offenders are on SCRAM, their compliance is outstanding. Less than 3% of our offenders drink while being monitored. They know that if they do, there’s a good chance they’re going back to jail.” She adds that probation typically makes the determination for which sanction to enforce if an offender is not compliant while on SCRAM.

Rosenberg states that the City’s SCRAM program is “totally self sustaining,” with the offender paying the cost of his or her monitoring. “Denver has a somewhat poor population, so we’ve implemented a sliding fee program to help offenders on fixed incomes,” she says. “We believe that if the offenders are responsible for paying their own fees, they have more of an investment in their success with the program.”

## DMV a “Great Use” of SCRAM

One of the newest ways the City is utilizing SCRAM is in the State of Colorado, Department of Motor Vehicle (DMV) division. For offenders who have lost their licenses due to repeat DUI convictions, they can apply to be reinstated with a restricted license if they can prove their sobriety for at least 180 days on SCRAM. “The DMV is making a great use of SCRAM,” says Rosenberg. “They’re using it in a way that is both effective and fair.”

## Program Results

“We are pursuing other uses for SCRAM, and would love to see it further combined with treatment programs,” adds Rosenberg. “We know that while it doesn’t treat a person by itself, SCRAM is a good complement to an individualized treatment program. If offenders can’t get into treatment right away, SCRAM provides that bridge to keep them accountable for their actions and staying sober during that time.”

Rosenberg attributes the success of the City and County of Denver’s SCRAM program to her “extraordinary” team of three full-time people who only work the SCRAM program, and one part-time employee. “They handle every aspect of the program, and are very efficient and thorough. Their reputation is key to maintaining goodwill with judges, court clerks, and probation. We continually conduct lunch seminars and workshops to educate the judges and the City about the effectiveness and the potential of SCRAM.”



- Total offenders monitored to date – 2,432
- Current clients on SCRAM – 166
- Total monitored days – 110,453
- Average monitoring period – 64 days
- Daily percentage of non-compliant offenders – 0.9%
- Sliding scale to determine daily fee rate for offenders on fixed income



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