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Kane makes most use of new alcohol testing technology

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After just one year, more Kane County defendants are wearing alcohol detection bracelets than in any other county in the state.

On April 1, 2007, Kane County began offering the Secure Continuous Remote Alcohol Monitor (SCRAM) as a way to keep drunken driving defendants out of jail and to keep the jail population down.

Since then, 250 defendants have been ordered to wear the bracelet while awaiting trial. As of this week, the state's attorney's office said, 146 defendants are wearing the monitoring devices.

Ten Kane County judges have used the SCRAM device as a sentencing tool with a 90 percent compliance rate, prosecutors said. Defendants on average wear the SCRAM bracelet for 200 days.

The SCRAM device has two black boxes, slightly smaller than a man's wallet, which are strapped to both sides of an offender's calf. The monitor takes hourly readings by measuring the alcohol content in a person's sweat.

Unlike a breath test, SCRAM can continually test if the wearer has been drinking alcohol, and it can determine how long he's been drinking.

"We're focused on changing behavior," said David Talarico, president of Alcohol Monitors of Illinois, which provides the device to Kane County. "If we don't change behavior, the recidivism risk is very high."

Talarico said courts in Kendall, DuPage, Will, Cook and Jackson counties also use SCRAM. He said that Kane County judges have ordered more defendants to wear the SCRAM device than those five counties combined.

"We will use every tool at our disposal in the war against drunken driving," said Kane State's Attorney John Barsanti. "Our families and communities demand it."

The SCRAM device gained national attention last summer when celebrities including Lindsey Lohan were ordered to wear it after problems with alcohol use.

The SCRAM device is offered to multiple drunken driving offenders, and all associated costs are paid by the user. Offenders pay \$6 to \$15 a day to wear the device -- taxpayers pay nothing.