

Alcohol Tester Market Overview

DOT / NHTSA Standards

Breath alcohol testers have been used by professionals for over 40 years. In the mid 1980s, the Department of Transportation (DOT) appointed the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to set the standards of accuracy for breath alcohol testers. These standards are now the benchmarks for breath alcohol testers used for workplace and law enforcement testing. The DOT/NHTSA has established two types of DOT/NHTSA approved units - screeners and evidential units.

Screeners are typically designed for use in a variety of settings, and are most commonly used by law enforcement for roadside testing. Since screeners are designed to test specific levels such as no tolerance (0.02% B.A.C.) and state drunk driving thresholds (0.08%), they are ideal for personal use.

Evidential units, on the other hand, are typically designed for regulated testing and when the results are to be used in a court of law. These units are typically used under strict protocol and in controlled conditions, such as hospitals or police stations. Their use in the consumer setting has been rather limited because their high cost does not typically justify the advantages (more fool proof related rather than accuracy related) for personal use.

FDA Pre-Marketing Clearance

In the early 1990s, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) set forth guidelines related to "over the counter" sales of tests for drugs of abuse. Congress determined that breath alcohol testing devices are a Class I "medical device". Most Class I medical devices are exempt from pre-marketing clearance; however, breath alcohol detectors are not exempt and, therefore, FDA clearance is required prior to any commercial distribution in the United States. Starting in 2003 the FDA and U.S. Customs started to heavily monitor the importation of breath alcohol detectors intended for personal use. If a personal breath alcohol detector lacks FDA clearance, the product cannot be legally sold in the United States.

Enabling Individuals to Screen Alcohol Content Quickly and Accurately

Sales of the personal alcohol testers grew rapidly in 2004 and 2005 as a result of the demand for devices designed to assist individuals in estimating their blood alcohol content and monitoring the blood alcohol content of others. Federal legislation aimed at lowering the blood alcohol standard to 0.08% in all 50 states has also sparked a keen awareness for an individual's need to make an informed decision prior to getting behind the wheel. In response to this demand, Q3 developed the AlcoHAWK® Series line of breath alcohol detectors to offer consumers innovative and sleek products with improved sensor accuracy and breath capture technology. The AlcoHAWK® Series breath alcohol screening devices are conveniently portable to easily fit in a pocket or glove compartment. Equipped with sophisticated semi-conductor sensor technology, the Alcohawk™ Series offers consumers the ability to estimate their blood alcohol content in seconds - anywhere at anytime!

