New drug driving laws that came into force last year mean that driving under the influence is a more significant concern than ever for employers – and none more so than operators of heavy vehicles, whose confidence in their employees' fitness to drive is of paramount importance. Whether for alcohol, illegal drugs or certain prescription medications which may impair driving ability, substance screening can help reduce the risk of accidents, and identify problems before they become dangerous. In this issue, we feature advice and information from a variety of suppliers to the industry, including of breathalysers and screening services.

Drug screening for 21st century transport

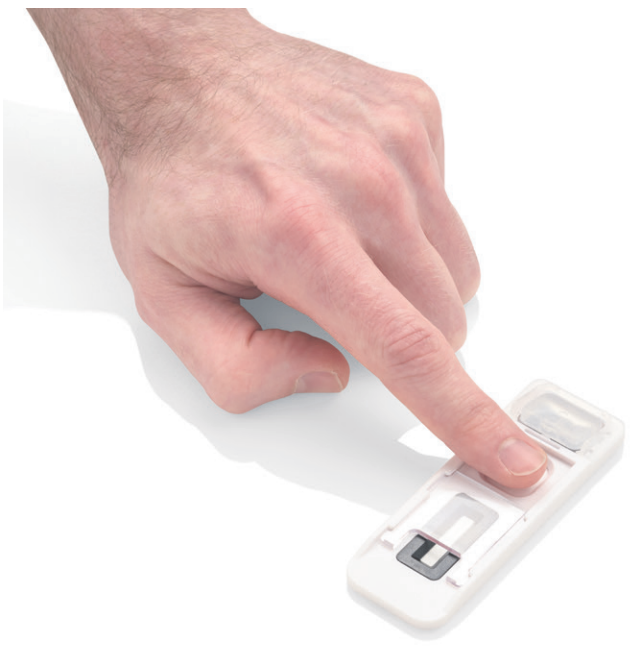
***Dr Paul Yates**, business development director at **Intelligent Fingerprinting**, examines how the advent of fingerprint-based testing technology could help tackle drug-driving*

Drug driving was thrown into the spotlight in the UK when new legislation was introduced in March 2015, making it unlawful to drive with eight illegal drugs and eight prescription drugs in the body above a specified level.

As a result, police officers can use a Home Office-approved 'drugalyser' to screen for cannabis and cocaine at the roadside, and screen for other illegal drugs, including ecstasy, LSD, ketamine and heroin, at the police station.

Since the legislation came into being, half of drivers stopped for suspected drug driving have tested positive, leading to 7,796 arrests for drug driving in England and Wales between March 2015 and April 2016.

Drivers who consume cannabis, the most commonly used illegal drug among UK adults, are two to six times more likely to have a road traffic collision than those who don't and, if combined with alcohol, that risk rises to 16 times.



Amphetamines and methamphetamines may not be as widely used as cannabis, but the risk of a collision following consumption is higher than either cannabis or cocaine. In Great Britain it is estimated that drug driving accounts for up to 200 deaths every year.

Transport operators need to take action to minimise risk and safeguard themselves, their workforce and the general public against drug driving by their employees.

In an effort to deter employee drug use, many transport companies have introduced drug and alcohol policies, including screening protocols and procedures. These policies form part of an employee's contractual obligations.

An active policy which discourages drug use by employees and identifies potential issues early can be invaluable. However, a 2014 report from road safety charity Brake showed that more than half (57 per cent) of employers with staff that drive for work do not test for drugs.

In many cases, workplace drug screening policies apply to all employees, but more typically it is employees in safety-critical roles such as drivers who are subject to drug testing.

Screening can take place as part of pre-employment checks, after an accident or with reasonable suspicion of drug use, or randomly. According to the Brake report, the most common form of screening is random testing, used by 29 per cent of employers.

The most widely used drug screening methods to provide evidence of recent drug use involve analysis of urine, oral fluid (saliva) or, less commonly, blood samples. Of these methods urine is the most widely used by fleet providers.

Current drug screening methods have their limitations. Collection of invasive body fluids for drug testing is costly, time-consuming and difficult to administer on-site because of the need to set up specially prepared collection areas and provide trained, often gender-specific, collectors on site as well as specialist waste disposal facilities.

Intelligent Fingerprinting is developing what is thought to be the world's first portable, fingerprint-based drug screening system. The system works by analysing fingerprint sweat to detect drug metabolites, which are chemicals produced by the body when it processes (metabolises) drugs of abuse.

The new drug screen requires the collection of a single fingerprint sample for analysis and detection of up to four drugs of abuse in one test. Collection of the fingerprint sample onto the test cartridge takes a few seconds and the cartridge is then inserted into a reader.

The reader analyses the fingerprint sweat for drug metabolites, providing a positive or negative result in less than 10 minutes and giving a simple pass or fail reading against pre-determined drug screening cut-off levels. The device automatically measures drug concentration against these cut-offs without the need for the operator to read test strip results or similar.

As the reader is portable, samples can be collected on-site for on-the-spot fitness for duty tests. Unlike body fluid drug screening, the test is completely non-invasive and presents no biohazard risk, so there is no need for specialist collection or sample disposal facilities.

The unique fingerprint-based drug screen is quick and easy to use, and fully portable. These benefits could result in an overall improvement in the effectiveness of the drug policies of fleet providers, in particular allowing truly random tests that discourage drug use whilst reducing the costs associated with the implementation of conventional body fluid drug screening solutions.

While drug-driving conviction rates hit the headlines and awareness of the prevalence of drug-driving continues to grow, many transport operators will no doubt be reviewing their HR processes to ensure their employee drug and alcohol policies are fit for purpose.

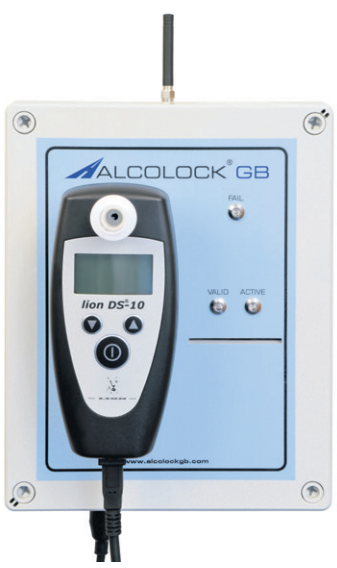
New emerging technologies such as the Intelligent Fingerprinting drug screening system can help to respect an employee's requirements for privacy and dignity, while protecting their colleagues and ensuring public safety.

www.intelligentfingerprinting.com

Alcolock GB: ten years of tackling drink driving

Alcolock GB, which is celebrating its tenth anniversary this year, offers a breathalyser/immobiliser solution in the form of the Alcolock DS-10. Manufactured by British firm Lion Laboratories, it is designed to prevent any driver from starting a vehicle while over a predefined alcohol limit.

From a breath sample, the Alcolock measures the amount of alcohol present, and will not allow the vehicle to operate if this amount is over a preset value. It can be configured to accommodate any level, from zero alcohol present through to the legal limit, depending on the policy of the company or organisation; and immobilisers may be set at any 'time out' period.



In the event of the Alcolock detecting an excessive alcohol reading and the vehicle being immobilised, the system will reset itself and be ready for a further breath sample to analyse. As soon as the Alcolock reads a sample under the preset limit, the vehicle will start and be able to operate normally.

The system can also be connected to the company's GSM unit, thereby offering operators live results – including text and email alerts in the case of a failed breath test or tampering with the system – anywhere throughout Europe or beyond.

By logging onto a dedicated website with a username and password, operators will have full access to data from all vehicles, or a single vehicle if desired. All test results are visible, listed by date and time and showing the actual alcohol level, if any. All reports are printable and stored online in case they need to be accessed at a later date.

The unit can be offered either on lease or through direct purchase, and costs less than a pound a day in either case, says the company. Leasing is available through Alcolock GB's partner company over periods from two to five years.

The firm emphasises its focus on customer service, from the process of purchase or lease through to fitment and on-going calibration by its engineering team – which can generally install the device at the customers' premises at the most convenient time, ensuring the least disruption to vehicle timetables.

Installation takes approx-imately two hours, after which the engineer will run through the operating procedures with any relevant personnel.

A call centre support service is available in the event of any issues, with operatives able to access the exact details relating to a given unit from the device code which is on the handset. The company can also supply a range of consumables and accessories.

www.alcolockgb.com