Many organizations/entities require alcohol testing under their Drug-Free Workplace Programs. For employers who fall under U.S. DOT regulations, alcohol testing is mandatory.

**The Evidential Breath Testing Device (EBT)**

An EBT is a certified breath testing device that is capable of measuring a person’s blood alcohol concentration. It must also be capable of conducting an air blank test that assures there is no residual alcohol in the testing chamber and of performing an external calibration check. That should match a known amount of alcohol against the machine’s measuring devices. In order to be considered an *evidential breath testing instrument*, the device also must:

- Produce a printed result in triplicate.
- Print a unique and sequential identifying number for each completed test, which the BAT and the employee are able to read before each test, and then print the number on each copy of the result.
- Print, on each copy of the result, the manufacturer’s model or name for the device, the device’s serial number, and the time the device performed the test.
- Have a manufacturer-developed quality assurance plan approved by NHTSA.

To protect the integrity of the test and to ensure accurate results, the procedures for conducting an alcohol test are rigorous. Alcohol tests are considered invalid when the following occur:

- The external calibration check of the EBT produces a result outside the allowed tolerance levels.
- The Breath Alcohol Technician (BAT) does not wait 15 minutes between the screening and confirmation tests.
• A valid air blank test that registers 0.00 is not performed before each confirmation test.
• The Alcohol Test Form with the attached EBT printout is not completed correctly. Employee, Screening Test Technician (STT), and BAT signatures, and relevant STT and BAT remarks are not included.
• The EBT fails to print the confirmation results, the sequential test number displayed by the device is not the same as the number on the printout, or the alcohol concentration displayed on the EBT is different from that which is printed out on the result.

The Collection Process

Alcohol tests should be conducted at a site that provides privacy to the employee being tested. The testing site must be secured with no unauthorized access at any time when the Alcohol Screening Device (ASD) and/or the Evidential Breath Testing (EBT) Device is unsecured or when testing is occurring. The Breath Alcohol Technician must conduct only one test at a time and must not leave the testing site while the preparations for testing or the test itself are in progress. The following procedures must be used in conducting the test:

• The employee must provide positive identification to the Breath Alcohol Technician or Screening Test Technician. The identification can be in the form of a company photo identification card, a driver’s license, or identification by an employer representative.
• The BAT/STT must explain the testing procedures to the employee.
• The employee and BAT/STT must complete, date, and sign the alcohol testing form.
• The BAT will inform the employee of the need to conduct a screening test and open an individually sealed, disposable mouthpiece in view of the employee and attach it to the EBT.
• The BAT will then instruct the employee to blow forcefully into the mouthpiece for at least 6 seconds or until an adequate amount of breath has been obtained.
• Following the screening test, the BAT must show the employee the result displayed on the EBT or the printed result.
• If the result of the screening test is an alcohol concentration of less than 0.02, no further testing is required and the test is reported to the employer as a negative test.
• If the result of the screening test is an alcohol concentration of 0.02 or greater, under the Federal regulations a confirmation test must be performed.
• The confirmation test must be conducted at least 15 minutes, but not more than 30 minutes, after the completion of the initial test. This delay prevents any accumulation of alcohol in the mouth from leading to an artificially high reading.
• The BAT will inform the employee of the need to conduct a confirmation test. The employee will be instructed not to eat, drink, or put any object or substance in his mouth. The BAT will also instruct the employee not to belch (to the extent possible).
• The BAT will conduct an air blank test on the EBT before the confirmation test is administered. This test ensures there is neither residual alcohol in the device nor any alcohol in the air in the room.
The confirmation test is conducted using the same procedures as the EBT screening test, except that a new mouthpiece is used.

The BAT will sign and date the form. If positive, the employee must sign and date the certification statement, which includes a notice that the employee cannot perform safety-sensitive functions if the results are 0.02 or greater.

The BAT will transmit all results to the employer’s DER in a confidential manner.

The DER will consult management and take appropriate action.

The Initial Test

The alcohol testing program, like drug testing, also requires two separate tests to confirm a positive result. The initial sample must be collected through an Evidential Breath Testing Device (EBT) that is approved by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), an approved saliva device, or a non evidential breath test device [alcohol screening device (ASD)]. All screening tests must be performed by either a trained Breath Alcohol Technician (BAT), or a Saliva Test Technician (STT) that is trained and credentialed.

For tests conducted on a saliva device, the following invalidates the result:

• The result is read before 2 minutes or after 15 minutes from the time the swab is inserted into the device.

• The device does not activate.

• The device is used for a test after the expiration date printed on its package.

• The STT fails to note on the alcohol testing form that the test was conducted using a saliva device.

The Confirmation Test

Under Federal regulations the confirmation test must be conducted between 15 and 30 minutes after the end of the screening or initial test. The confirmation test must be performed using an Evidential Breath Testing device (EBT) that has been classified as such by NHTSA. The test must be performed by a certified BAT.

Consequences of a Positive Test

The DOT regulations, and most drug-free workplace policies, prohibit an employer from allowing an employee with an alcohol concentration of 0.04 or greater to perform any safety-sensitive functions until he has been evaluated by a SAP and has passed a return-to-duty test. An employee with an alcohol concentration of 0.02 or greater, but less than 0.04, must be removed from duty for 24 hours.