

## The A to Z of alcohol testing

Written by Angus MacArthur

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Alcohol testing in workplaces should be conducted to ensure that machine operators, drivers and workers are safe and sober to do their jobs. Angus MacArthur, general manager and co-owner of Alcohol Breathalysers, highlights some benefits and provides tips on how to ensure a speedy testing process.

The benefits of on-site alcohol testing include: reducing the risk of alcohol-related accidents; increased productivity of your workforce (by ensuring that workers are not under the influence of alcohol while on the job); cost savings in terms of damage to machines and company property; and, ultimately, saving the lives of workers and drivers.

An “ideal ratio”, between a company’s number of employees and the number of breathalysers it needs, depends on whether random, voluntary or mandatory alcohol testing (or a combination of the three) is implemented.

For evidentiary-type alcohol testing, just one machine is required per site.

For mandatory entrance-point testing – if hundreds of staff, visitors and contractors have to be tested daily – then high-speed industrial breathalysers, such as the Vuvuthela (handheld), or Alcoscan Entrance Breathalyser Systems (EBS) (fixed system) are required. These can perform tens of thousands of tests within a six- to 12-month calibration cycle.

If 500 to 1 000 people need to be tested daily, using Fixed Entrance Breathalyser Systems, then between five and ten industrial machines would be needed at any given entry point, to ensure that long queues don’t build up every day and that breathalyser machines are not overburdened.

If handheld breathalysers are used for random alcohol testing procedures, then fewer machines would be needed and, again, the number would depend entirely on the number of staff tested daily.

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If handheld breathalysers are used for mandatory alcohol testing, then at least one industrial breathalyser would be needed for up to 50 staff. Two would be required for 50 to 100 staff, and two to four would be required for 100 to 200 staff.

The “ideal ratio” would be one industrial breathalyser for every 50 persons to be tested daily. Another factor would be whether a company wants to test employees with a breathalyser that requires a mouthpiece.

Employers should install automated Alcoscan Entrance Breathalyser Systems, such as the EBS010, on their turnstile gates if they want to speed up the testing process.

The EBS010 provides a four-second test procedure – one second to warm up, one to blow, one to display the result and trigger a release for the turnstile gate to open (or remain closed), and one second to reset for the next test.

This system is ideal for manufacturing, mining and other industrial sites, as it speeds up alcohol testing procedures and reduces long-term calibration expenses.