

City of North Las Vegas, NV

Fast-growing City Leverages SCRAM[®] to Take the Gamble Out of Dealing with Alcohol Offenders

“We’ve found that if offenders are compliant while on SCRAM, they’re probably compliant in other areas of their probation.”

*The Honorable
Judge Sean Hoeffgen,
Municipal Court Judge,
North Las Vegas Municipal Court*



The Problem

With the distinction of being the third-fastest growing large city in the U.S., the City of North Las Vegas, Nevada has experienced its share of corresponding growing pains with DUI and other alcohol-related offenses. Since 2000, North Las Vegas' population has grown by over 75%, making it home to 202,520 residents by the end of 2006. Approximately 1,200 new residents move to North Las Vegas each month, and the City estimates that by the time it reaches build-out in 2025, its population will be over a half million.

While North Las Vegas caters to a mix of professional and service-industry residents and is a conventional city by most standards, the fact that it's located only a few miles from the Las Vegas Strip contributes significantly to its alcohol problems. "The 24x7 availability of alcohol within such a short proximity has presented unique challenges," explains Robert Jones, Program Coordinator for the North Las Vegas Municipal Court. "There's always a place to get a drink at all hours of the day or night and, quite often, it's free," he explains. "Combine that with our City's rapid growth and it's apparent why alcohol has become such a big problem."

The City was relying on random breath testing to monitor offenders. "It was highly inaccurate because the person could have drunk the day before and we wouldn't know it," says Jones. "Plus it took a lot of man hours to administer."

The City turned to SCRAM® (Secure Continuous Remote Alcohol Monitor) as a better way to handle its growing docket of DUI offenders. "We saw it at a conference, and were so intrigued by its ability to continuously monitor offenders that we decided to try it out," says Jones.

The SCRAM Program

The City of North Las Vegas is "very serious about dealing with DUI," agrees Aaron Fleisher, Program Coordinator for Total Court Services (TCS) of Nevada, exclusive provider of SCRAM to the City. Since the first offender was put on SCRAM in August 2005, the City's program has been growing steadily. TCS now has 110 SCRAM bracelets in inventory, and over 230 offenders have been monitored to date. While the majority of these have been DUI cases, SCRAM is also used for domestic violence and assault cases where alcohol was a contributing factor, as well as for public drunkenness or disturbing the peace.

For first or second-time DUI offenders handled by the Municipal Court, SCRAM may be ordered depending on a number of variables. For example, offenders with BAC levels of 0.18 or above or second DUIs are likely candidates for SCRAM. While Nevada state law mandates that offenders with a BAC of 0.18 or above must undergo a substance abuse evaluation prior to their final sentencing, often the judge could order the offender on SCRAM even before the evaluation. After the evaluation takes place, the counselor determines if SCRAM is warranted and provides a supporting recommendation to the judge. In evaluating first-time DUI offenders, the counselor may also look at things like past arrest histories and BAC levels in order to determine if SCRAM monitoring is appropriate.

Offenders are typically placed on SCRAM for 90 days. Depending on the evaluation results and the judge's decision, some offenders can be put on SCRAM for 180 days or even up to a year, particularly in domestic violence cases.

Technology and Treatment

Whether or not they are ordered on SCRAM, all DUI offenders must use ignition interlock for a year (Nevada state law), attend a DUI school and a victim impact panel (Stop DUI), and perform a specified amount of community service. After the evaluation, counselors may also recommend that the offender receives counseling or other types of treatment.

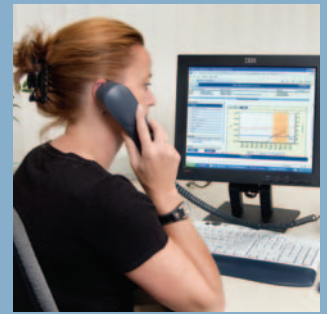
"We might use SCRAM to evaluate the severity of the offender's alcohol dependency and recommend AA, counseling, or even intensive outpatient treatment," says Jones. "While SCRAM does a great job deterring offenders from drinking, we realize that it alone does not solve the whole problem for people who are hardcore, habitual drinkers. Something caused that person to be out there drinking and driving, so we want to be able to get them the help they need."

Program Results

The City's Municipal Court Judges are very positive about the role SCRAM plays in their courtroom. "SCRAM is a great tool, and one of the best I've seen in my 38 years of dealing with alcohol offenders," says the Honorable Judge Warren VanLandschoot who, prior to being elected to the office of Municipal Court Judge, served for 28 years with the North Las Vegas Police Department. He says that SCRAM has been particularly effective in deterring offenders from repeat incidents. "We don't see many alcohol offenders come back through our courts once they've been on SCRAM," he adds.

Judge Sean Hoeffgen concurs. "We've found that if offenders are compliant while on SCRAM, they're probably compliant in other areas of their probation. SCRAM is a great way to track compliance, and is an important first step to get people to stop abusing alcohol and start making positive changes in their lives for themselves, their families, and the community."

Jones is in the process of developing an exit survey to give offenders as they come off SCRAM to determine its effectiveness in making lasting changes in their lives. "We know SCRAM is a good solution for us, and we're seeing positive results from it. But it will also be helpful to get the perspective of those who have worn it for a few months to see the outcome it has with them."



- Minimum SCRAM monitoring – 90 days
- Total SCRAM bracelets in program – 110
- Total offenders monitored – 230+
- Average of 50+ clients monitored per day
- 90+% compliance rate while on SCRAM
- Depending on evaluation, may also be ordered on treatment

