



On the Road:

Safely without Alcohol.

Dräger Interlock[®]

The Dutch transport company Kuipers Logistics is on the road to success with the breath alcohol-activated immobiliser Dräger Interlock 7000. The entire Kuipers fleet has been using the device for several years now and, so far, there has not been a single alcohol-related incident. Kuipers also makes active use of the Dräger device in its marketing: "Your goods are in safe hands with us" is the message that the logistics company from Oldenzaal sends out to its customers. According to CEO Harry Kuipers, the alcohol-activated immobiliser now gives them an edge, in the face of stiff competition.



"We have fitted our entire fleet of vehicles with an alcohol-activated immobiliser. Every driver has to be breathalysed before starting up the lorry. This means that drivers are always sober when they are on the road. Maximum safety!"

It is only one small paragraph on the Kuipers website – but very important nonetheless. Harry Kuipers knows that his customers really value this promise. **"Customers entrust us with their valuable goods and so need to know they will be shipped as safely as possible,"** explains the CEO of Kuipers Logistics. "Customers have to feel confident that their goods are safe with us at all times." For Kuipers Logistics that means constant vigilance to ensure and improve safety. A breath alcohol-activated immobiliser such as the Dräger Interlock 7000 in all its vehicles is "an important component" of this safety concept.

So far, this strategy has served Kuipers Logistics well. Founded in 1988 with just one lorry, the company now has 45 tractor units and 65 trailers, making it one of the largest logistics providers in the Twente region of Holland. The company has specialised primarily in transport between the Netherlands and Italy. Kuipers Logistics bases its operations on an uncompromising quality strategy. No outsourcing the fleet to low-wage countries, a high rate of retention of drivers, regular training courses and coaching sessions and double the standard industry servicing frequency are testament to the consistent attitude of the Oldenzaal-based company in matters of safety. "If you are only interested in a cheap service, you have come to the wrong place," says the company boss. At Kuipers Logistics, it is the quality of the transport service that is paramount. For the 52-year-old it is also a way of resisting the constant pressure to make further cost reductions. Costs cannot keep spiralling down indefinitely, says Harry Kuipers. Instead we have to seek out customers who "share our safety and quality aspirations".

Safety in the transport sector is made up of many components. One of these is the human factor... and humans make mistakes and have weaknesses. According to official figures, it is estimated that today one in ten people in Europe has a problem with drugs or alcohol. There is no reason to think that this proportion will be smaller among lorry drivers. **On the contrary, the high pressure to reduce costs, the difficult working conditions and rest periods on inhospitable parking areas all increase the danger of drivers resorting to alcohol.** Harry Kuipers makes no secret of the fact that there is alcohol abuse within the industry: "Unfortunately, I have recently seen a few cases where HGV drivers have been found to be under the influence. Rest periods represent a particular danger, because people often underestimate the time it takes for alcohol to be metabolised, so they cannot be sure of being sober behind the wheel the morning after a sociable evening.



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That's why the Oldenzaal transport service provider decided many years ago: Kuipers Logistics has a zero-tolerance policy when it comes to alcohol. Kuipers drivers are required to turn up for their shifts sober; consuming alcohol during working hours is strictly forbidden. The first time a driver breaks this rule he will receive a warning but, if he reoffends within the next three years, he will be sacked. This strict rule is imposed not only to ensure the safety of drivers and other road users but also to uphold the company's good reputation.

"I shudder when I imagine reading in the newspapers: Kuipers Logistics has had an accident involving drugs or alcohol," says Harry Kuipers. "We cannot afford and do not intend to let that happen." A reputation that has been painstakingly built up over many years would be ruined in an instant. The owner of the firm therefore understands that the misconduct of a single person could threaten the existence of the whole firm and consequently the jobs of its employees. That's why Harry Kuipers wanted to make sure that his strict zero-alcohol policy is always adhered to, even on the long journeys between Italy and Holland. **"In order to maximise safety, we therefore decided to install breath alcohol-activated immobilisers in our vehicles."**

Kuipers Logistics tested devices from three different manufacturers before deciding to go with Dräger. Harry Kuipers

explains that this choice was simply based on the fact that the Dräger device came out on top. Since 2009, every Kuipers Logistics tractor unit has been fitted with a Dräger Interlock. We installed the devices ourselves and, after a short familiarisation period, everything went smoothly, reports Philip Vollenbroek, Fleet Manager at Kuipers Logistics, responsible for operation of the alcohol interlock. **"The device is easy to install in the vehicle and to link to the on-board computer."** Philip Vollenbroek reads the data records himself and performs the necessary annual calibration of the devices, which only takes 5 minutes. The devices, which are low maintenance and reliable, have been giving Kuipers Logistics dependable service for seven years now (as at 2016). Vollenbroek: "Once they have been installed, there are practically no follow-on costs."

The time it takes up for drivers is within reasonable limits, says owner Harry Kuipers. The breathalysing process delays the starting process by a maximum of ten seconds and then, if they pass the test, they are given clearance to set off. On the other hand, if the alcohol interlock detects alcohol, they are not allowed to start for a certain period, which varies according to individual circumstances. In this case, the interface to the vehicle's on-board computer ensures that a message is sent to headquarters via the fleet management system.

Initially, Kuipers Logistics drivers had mixed feelings about adopting the immobilisers. Some of them felt they were being patronised, concedes company boss Kuipers. "We explained to them that this is an additional part of our preventive safety philosophy and helps to ensure that they are always safe when they are on the road." This won the drivers over. The boss is convinced that the drivers are now proud to comply with the safety system. They have often been asked about it and are proud to be able to say that their company takes safety seriously.

This has also been the experience of driver Jort Kuipers. He admits that he initially found the immobiliser irritating. "It took a while for me to get used to it. It made you feel as if you were being controlled." But, when you think about it, the advantages are obvious. **"This immobiliser gives you confidence, because now you know you are sober behind the wheel.** And now, if you go to the pub for a few drinks, you think about the fact that you have to drive the next day. We are now a lot more conscious of our actions." Jort Kuipers: "I like the fact that I am breathalysed. I don't feel like I'm being monitored."

CEO Harry Kuipers also sees financial benefits to his business. He says the number of accidents has dropped. Following introduction of the devices, he had a memorable conversation with his insurance company. "Have you stopped working on Mondays?" the insurance company asked him during the annual review meeting. **Previously most accidents happened on a Monday – but not any more.** That says it all, asserts Kuipers.

The immobilisers are also an advantage to the company when it is talking to its customers, or potential customers. Customers would value the extra level of safety offered by Kuipers. **The Dräger Interlocks have therefore had a positive effect upon business.** It is also an advantage in negotiations with the insurance company if you can say that you have a breath alcohol-activated immobiliser, because that means that you are doing your utmost in terms of accident prevention, adds Fleet Manager Philip Vollenbroek.

And, last but not least, Kuipers Logistics has earned independent external recognition: in 2007, the company received the Transport & Logistics Business Award for exemplary safety management. Harry Kuipers' assessment: **"We are very happy with Dräger Interlocks, because the number of accidents has dropped significantly and we can be confident that drivers are not getting behind the wheel while under the influence of alcohol. It is an enormous relief to have this certainty."**



Harry Kuipers, owner of the company:
"The number of accidents has dropped."



Philip Vollenbroek, Fleet Manager:
"The extra level of safety also gives us a competitive edge."



Jort Kuipers, driver:
"We are now a lot more conscious of our actions"

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