Bill 26 boosts sales of personal breathalyzers

Police prefer drivers not use the devices

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ales of personal breathalyzer devices are on the rise in Alberta as the province prepares to enact new and tougher legislation

on drunk driving.

Bill 26, passed in the legislature on Tills day, will be enacted next year, introducing penalties for people who blow between .05 and .08. It also gives police greater powers to impound the vehicles of drivers whose bloodalcohol level is beneath the Criminal Code mark of .08.

The bill is largely modelled after B.C.'s year-old law, which saw a marked decrease in drunk driving

Tim Salter, owner of Preathalyzer Canada, a distributor of digital, reusable, hand-held breathalyzers for personal use, said media attention to the drunk driving law changes in B.C created greater demand for his company's products.

"Our sales in B.C. went up 20 times the normal amount that we sell in that



Calgary Herald Archive cial government's

Sales of personal breathalyzer devices in Alberta have jumped in the wake of the provincial government's push to get tougher on drinking and driving by imposing penalties on drivers who have a blood-alcohol level between .05 and .08, including greater powers to impound vehicles.

province during the announcement of the new law. We're seeing that same swing in Alberta right now,"

He estimated that sales are up to times in Alberta in recent weeks. In two years, Salter said he's sold thousands of the devices, which online go for \$67 to \$300.

He claims the readings are accurate to within .005.

"It's definitely something you can use over and over," Salter said.

Police say they have concerns with

personal breathalyzer devices, such as whether a person who has been drinking can operate it properly and they question how the products are

made and calibrated.
"Any drinking creates a level of impairment. What we're taking about

is how impaired they are," said RCMP spokesman Sgt. Patrick Webb.

"By far what we recommend is don't worry about testing devices. Get a designated driver, take a taxi or find another way to not get behind the wheel. If you're that concerned that you have to be onto one of these instruments, the question is there. So you shouldn't be behind the wheel." Webb said.

Police in Calgary say drunk driving charges are down slightly so far in 2011.

In the first 10 months of the year there have been 2,458 impaired driving charges handed out, compared with 2,483 in the same period in 2010. There have also been 2,282 24-hour suspensions issued from January to October, which is down from 2,412 in the corresponding time frame last year.

Salter said the device is meant to help educate people who don't know how much they ve had to drink more not to encourage them to drink more if they test lower than expected.

The results shown by his devices will not stand up in court or sway police, he added.

"The law says you can drink and drive. The law says you can't drink too much and drive," Salter said.

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