Breath Alcohol Testing—
Are You Really Prepared?

You got your BAT training and you're set for 5 years, right? Wrong. As the manufacturer of one of the most widely used breath alcohol testing devices in workplace testing, we get phone calls every day from panicked users who don't remember what to do as well as calls from employers who must decipher the procedure the BAT followed. The following are just a few of the situations we have encountered over the years.

You perform a screening test and get a result that is greater than or equal to .020 g/210L. As per regulations, you tell the employee not to eat, drink, smoke, chew or put anything in their mouth and begin a 15-minute waiting period. After 21 minutes (you got distracted with your paperwork) you go to the Evidential Breath Tester (EBT) and start another screening test by mistake. That test result is also above .020 g/210L. The results are attached to the Alcohol Testing Form (ATF) and the form is completed and signed and the DER is notified. The next day, the DER contacts you and asks why both printed test results say ‘Screening Test’. Shouldn't there be an air blank before the second test?

Oops. The BAT did not verify that an air blank was performed prior to the confirmation test and therefore the test has to be cancelled. It's too late to test the subject again because it is now the next day. The employer cannot take action on a cancelled test and the BAT needs error correction training.

Remember, as a BAT it is your responsibility to know that an air blank is required prior to a confirmation test and to verify that the blank has been conducted by the EBT during the test process.
Employers should question collection sites about their training practices—just because someone has a certificate that says they were trained as a BAT three years ago does not guarantee that person is a competent and capable technician today. For every single alcohol test a BAT performs, he or she must demonstrate the following skills:
- Ability to respond to the device’s messages and commands.
- Know what actions to take when an error message or malfunction occurs.
- Ability to conduct an air blank or the knowledge that an air blank has been conducted.

- Perform the test correctly with respect to the manufacturer’s requirements for that specific EBT and according to 49 CFR Part 40 rules.
- Identify and explain actions he/she will take when the device does not function properly (e.g., failed accuracy check).
- Explain when an accuracy check is required and identify the procedures and/or person(s), if other than the BAT, responsible for performing the calibration checks.

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The BAT performs a successful accuracy check on the instrument but does not record it in the calibration logbook.