

The Cost of a DUI



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About the only way to avoid any of the expenses associated with a DUI is to take one of the field or chemical tests and pass. When you sign your California driver's license you give "implied consent" to having your breath, blood or urine tested if you are pulled over on suspicion of DUI. If you refuse the test or fail it, your driver's license will be immediately suspended and you will be taken into custody. California will impose a fine and may suspend your license for refusing the test even if it's later determined you were not driving under the influence.

You may say, "No problem, I have a good attorney." Not so fast – even experienced DUI attorneys may not help you avoid all the costs that come with an arrest. In 2007, the last year that statistics are available, there were 203,866 arrests for DUI in California and 75% of them resulted in a conviction.

In California, one DUI conviction can literally change your life.

From the moment you're taken into custody, you start a running total. Keeping in mind that each jurisdiction's costs, fines and penalties will be a little different, this is what you can expect if you're suspected of driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs:

- Your car will be impounded. You will be charged a towing fee and pay for the privilege of having the local authorities look after your vehicle while you get the mess sorted out. There could also be a vehicle release fee. The ticker starts at \$250 or more just to keep your car in your possession.
- You will need to post bail so that you may be released from custody until your first hearing. Your bail will vary depending on the county and circumstances surrounding your arrest, but can range from a few hundred to a few thousand dollars. If you don't have that kind of cash on hand, you will call a bail bondsman.

Bail bondsmen will typically ask for 10 percent of the total bond. If your bond is \$5000, you're still going to have to come up with \$500 quickly.

- On a first offense DUI conviction, you will be fined not less than \$390, and not more than \$1,000, excluding court fees.
- California requires 96 hours of jail time if you're convicted of a DUI, 48 of which much be served consecutively. Many judges allow this time in work service. All of this will likely result in some time off work, and for many people lost time means lost wages. DUIs remain on your criminal record for life if employers or future landlords do a background

check.

- You will get a minimum of 3 years probation.
- Your insurance carrier may place a surcharge on your auto insurance policy for up to three years. However, because a DUI stays on your driving record for 10 years in California, a driver with a DUI will not be eligible for a good driver discount for up to 10 years.
- Pay a license re-issue fee of at least \$125. To get your license back you will probably have to complete an approved alcohol education and treatment program at your own expense.

If you get your license back it will likely be restricted and you may be required to install an ignition interlock device, also at your own expense. An ignition interlock device (IID) is wired to your vehicle's ignition and requires your breath sample before the engine will start. If the IID detects alcohol on your breath, the engine will not start. As you drive, you are periodically required to provide breath samples to ensure you haven't taken a drink since beginning your journey.

Remember, driving is a privilege, not a right. So when the bartender starts turning up the lights and sounding the bell for last call, ask yourself, "can I afford it?"
