



Driver's licenses suspended for unpaid traffic fines may be recovered under new court order

❖ Read this *only* if you live in Washington State.

The Department of Licensing (DOL) can no longer suspend driver's licenses because a driver did not pay non-criminal traffic tickets or did not go to court in response to the traffic ticket. A court has declared this unconstitutional.

The court ordered DOL to reinstate these suspended licenses, meaning they will no longer be suspended. The court also prohibited DOL from automatically suspending a driver's license for unpaid traffic tickets until a new law goes into effect in January 2023.

❖ This court order relates only to suspensions for **non-criminal moving violations** like speeding. It does not cover suspensions for criminal traffic violations like driving with a suspended or revoked license (DWLS3), driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol (DUI), or reckless driving.

What does this mean for me?

If your license was suspended only because you failed to pay traffic tickets or didn't appear at a related hearing:

- Your driver's license is no longer suspended, as of **June 16, 2021**.
- You will not have to pay the \$75 reissuance fee.
- DOL will reinstate your license if you are eligible for reinstatement.

What do I do next?

Register at [DOL's License eXpress](https://www.dol.wa.gov/licenseexpress) to determine the status of your driver's license at no cost: [dol.wa.gov/licenseexpress.html](https://www.dol.wa.gov/licenseexpress.html). Follow the step-by-step instructions.

You still have to pay [general license and renewal fees](#). To learn about those fees, visit dol.wa.gov/driverslicense/fees.html.

Some drivers will need to [take the driving test](#). To learn about testing requirements, costs, and locations, visit dol.wa.gov/driverslicense/testing.html.

Can I start driving now?

Maybe.

Check to confirm that the suspension has been lifted by either:

- A. Calling DOL's automated line: (360) 902-3900; **OR**
- B. Checking the [status of your license](#) at dol.wa.gov/driverslicense/checkstatus.html

You can likely start driving again if all of these are true:

- Your license was suspended within the last 6 years for failure to pay or appear
- Your driver's license has not expired within that time
- Your license is in your possession

❖ **Driving with a suspended license is illegal.** Don't risk getting fines and possible jail time. Drive only with a valid license.

Do I still owe the fines to the court or collection agency?

Yes. Those don't go away.

You can request a payment plan or, instead of paying, request to do community service towards that debt.

Read [My Driver License Was Suspended. Can I Get It Back?](#)

❖ **CAUTION:** Your wages and/or bank account could be garnished if you do not pay the fines or do community service.

My license is no longer suspended, and it is not expired. Do I need to do anything?

Your license is valid and you can drive with it. You still owe the traffic fines. Again, you can request a payment plan or community service, if you cannot afford to pay the fines in full.

Read [My Driver License Was Suspended. Can I Get It Back?](#) for more information. Find it on WashingtonLawHelp.org.

My license is no longer suspended, but it is expired now. What should I do?

If your license is expired, you must renew it. That may include taking the [written and driving tests](#). Visit dol.wa.gov/driverslicense/testing.html to learn about testing requirements, costs, and locations.

Carry another form of identification until you get your license back.

I checked the status of my license. My license is still suspended. What should I do?

Your license may still be suspended for several other reasons.

For example, if you are required to have financial responsibility insurance, called [SR-22 insurance](#), for high-risk drivers, or if you failed to pay child support.

- For information about SR-22 insurance for high-risk drivers, visit dol.wa.gov/driverslicense/sr22.html.
- To understand license suspensions for [failure to pay child support](#), read [Child Support and License Suspension](#). You can also visit dol.wa.gov/driverslicense/suspendchildsupport.html.

DOL can also suspend your license if you get too many traffic tickets in a short period of time (six or more within one year or seven or more within two years).

Carry another form of identification until you get your license back.

I have never had a driver's license but due to unpaid tickets, I'm currently not eligible to get a license. Can I get a license now?

If you have never been a [licensed driver](#) in Washington or any other state and you got a traffic ticket, DOL suspended your driving privileges. Check your status at dol.wa.gov/driverslicense/checkstatus.html, because you may now be eligible to get your license.

If you are now eligible, you can take the [written and driving tests](#) to get your license. To learn about testing requirements, costs, and locations, visit dol.wa.gov/driverslicense/testing.html.

Carry another form of identification until you get your license.

What do I do if DOL says I need to pay the \$75 reissue fee?

If you were charged with **driving while your license was suspended in the third degree** (DWLS3) and the charge was reduced, dismissed or you were found not guilty of DWLS3, you may be eligible for a waiver of the \$75 reissuance fee.

Email DOL at FTAQuestions@dol.wa.gov before going to DOL or renewing online to notify DOL staff of your circumstances. DOL will review your driving record to determine if you are eligible for a waiver.

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- ❖ For questions, email DOL at FTAQuestions@dol.wa.gov and if you need help, see below.
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Get Legal Help

- **Apply online** with [CLEAR*Online](https://nwjustice.org/apply-online) - nwjustice.org/apply-online
- **Facing a legal issue in King County** (other than Eviction or Foreclosure)? Call 2-1-1 (or toll-free 1-877-211-9274) weekdays 8:00 am - 6:00 pm. They will refer you to a legal aid provider.
- **Facing a legal issue outside of King County** (other than Eviction or Foreclosure)? Call the CLEAR Hotline at 1-888-201-1014 weekdays between 9:15 am - 12:15 pm or apply online at nwjustice.org/apply-online.
- **Facing Eviction?** Call 1-855-657-8387.
- **Facing Foreclosure?** Call 1-800-606-4819.
- **Seniors (age 60 and over)** with a legal issue outside of King County can also call CLEAR*Sr at 1-888-387-7111.
- **Deaf, hard of hearing or speech impaired callers** can call any of these numbers using the relay service of your choice.

CLEAR and 2-1-1 will provide interpreters.

This publication provides general information concerning your rights and responsibilities. It is not intended as a substitute for specific legal advice.

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