

\$10,000 for a DUI? Study shows the real cost

Anthony Kuipers/Moscow-Pullman Daily News

A driving under the influence arrest affects more than a driver's criminal record. It can also put a dent in their bank account.

In Pullman, a DUI conviction can cost a driver more than \$10,000, according to a recent study by NerdWallet, a consumer-focused financial website. The study adds up the cost of the fine, attorney's fees, insurance increases and ignition interlock fees that a driver incurs after a DUI conviction.

The study said a typical Washington driver will pay an extra \$466 each year for insurance during the five years following a DUI conviction. That adds up to \$2,334. Drivers in most cities will see more than a 50 percent increase in their car insurance premium after a single DUI.

In Pullman, drivers can expect to see their premium increase by an average of \$378. This is significant considering the average Pullman driver pays around \$736 a year for insurance, according to the report

Then there's the fine. The minimum fine in Washington for a first-time offender with a blood alcohol content of less than .15 is \$940.50. The maximum is \$5,000. In 2013, the average fine imposed in Washington for all DUI convictions was \$3,711.

Additionally, the study said, drivers will pay around \$2,000 in lawyer fees, based on data from the Washington Traffic Safety Commission.

Drivers will also have to install an ignition interlock device in their vehicle. First-time offenders must have the device for at least a year. NerdWallet, based on information from the state Department of Licensing, said this will cost about \$1,300.

In Pullman, drivers who receive the minimum fine can still expect to pay more than \$6,133 following a conviction. Those who receive the maximum fine will pay around \$10,192.

While that's a hefty amount, these costs are actually among the least expensive in the state, according to the study. Only Ellensburg and Wenatchee drivers can expect to pay less.

The study, which includes 66 cities, shows that Tacoma drivers pay the most. They can expect to pay between \$7,398 and \$11,458, largely because they have some of the highest insurance rates in the state.

According to Mothers Against Drunk Driving, Washington ranks 25th in the country for the highest number of drunk driving fatalities.

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