

Impaired Driving Amendments

NEW IMPAIRED DRIVING LAWS

All drivers convicted of impaired driving in Prince Edward Island are required to install an ignition interlock device on their vehicles, at their own expense.

The law outlines minimum time for how long the device must remain installed: one year for the first offence, two years for the second offence, and five years for the third offence. An additional year is added if a child is in the vehicle at the time of the offence. Offenders are required to cover the costs associated with the device.

Impaired drivers can have their vehicle impounded for up to 6 months, rather than the previous maximum of 60 days. Offenders also face daily impoundment fees charged by the storage lots. In March 2013, impoundment charges were around \$10 - \$15 per day.

NEWS RELEASE

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LEGISLATION TARGETS CHRONIC IMPAIRED DRIVERS

CHARLOTTETOWN, PEI -- Proposed amendments to the Highway Traffic Act will clamp down on those who choose to repeatedly drive while under the influence of alcohol, Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal Minister Robert Vessey says.

“Individuals who continue to get behind the wheel while impaired – even after being caught and convicted – are especially dangerous because they haven’t gotten the message that it is unacceptable to drink and drive,” Minister Vessey said. “It’s their behavior that we need to change if we ever hope to make our roads safer for all Islanders.”

The amendments will do four things:

- increase the mandatory ignition interlock device sentence for a second offence to five years (from the current two) if the driver’s blood-alcohol content (BAC) is above 0.16 – or twice the legal limit – and to 10 years (from five) for a third and subsequent offense;
- establish “administrative probation,” which tags the repeat offender’s driver licence with law enforcement as someone who should not be behind the wheel with more than a 0.00 BAC;
- set a fine of \$2,000 for violating administrative prohibition as well as 12 demerits, which will automatically result in drivers licence suspension; and

- introduce a specially coded licence plate that third-time offenders may apply for – along with administrative probation – if they complete five clean years of their mandatory 10-year ignition interlock sentence.

The total number of impaired-driving convictions has steadily decreased over the past four years due in part to tougher legislation, targeted patrols by law enforcement, and more Islanders calling 9-1-1 from their vehicles when they witness an impaired driver. However, the proportion of second- and third-time offenders has slightly increased, prompting the need for tougher penalties for this group.

“Addressing an issue like impaired driving requires an integrated approach, with all police agencies across the Island working together with the provincial government,” said Charlottetown Police Chief Paul Smith, who is vice president of the PEI Chiefs of Police Association. “This legislation will give us another tool in our toolkit to help us keep these chronic offenders off our roadways and increase safety for everyone.”

The proposed amendments would take effect on July 7.

For Backgrounder, visit www.gov.pe.ca/photos/original/ImpDrivLegisBkg.pdf

For more information, visit www.gov.pe.ca/impaireddriving

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