



## **SURVEY ON THE COSTS OF DWI FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS JUNE 2006**

As part of an ongoing effort to reduce impaired driving in Texas, the Texas Department of Transportation recently studied the costs associated with Driving While Intoxicated (DWI) arrests and convictions. Surveyors interviewed county clerks, district attorneys, DWI defense lawyers, and past DWI offenders in the six most populated regions in Texas: Dallas/Fort Worth, Houston, Austin, San Antonio, El Paso and the Rio Grande Valley. Additionally, the Texas Department of Public Safety, the Texas Center for the Judiciary and the Texas District and County Attorneys Association were consulted during the survey.

The total costs of a DWI arrest and conviction range from \$9,000 to \$24,000 for a first-time offense across the state. In addition to the obvious safety risks, there is a tremendous financial risk for Texans who choose to drive under the influence of alcohol. This survey lists the myriad costs offenders can face.

### **What was this study about?**

The study explored the costs typically associated with a DWI arrest in Texas, including lesser-known, but significant costs.

### **Why was this study conducted?**

Most people have no idea how much it actually costs to get a DWI in Texas. Traffic safety officials feel that if motorists were better informed, this information would help reduce the incidence of drinking and driving on our roadways. The study is part of an ongoing effort, along with the enforcement efforts of the Texas Department of Public Safety and local law enforcement agencies, to reduce the amount of drunk-driving incidents in Texas.

### **How were the data gathered?**

NuStats, an Austin-based firm, conducted qualitative interviews in the six most populated markets in Texas: Austin, Dallas/Fort Worth, El Paso, Houston, the Rio Grande Valley and San Antonio. Interviews were conducted during June of 2006.

### **Who was interviewed?**

County clerks, district attorneys, DWI defense lawyers and past DWI offenders. In addition, the Texas Department of Public Safety, the Texas Center for the Judiciary and the Texas District and County Attorneys Association were consulted during the survey.

### **What were the survey’s main findings?**

Depending on the location and unique circumstances surrounding the DWI arrest, the cost goes beyond the fine (\$2,000 for a first-time offense). Some of the costs associated with a Driving While Intoxicated arrest and conviction are as follows.

Car towing, impounding	\$30–\$350
Bail for release from jail	\$187–\$5,000
Attorney fees	\$275–\$10,000
Court costs	\$25–\$1,500
Hearing to regain driver license	\$125–\$1,937 (includes attorney fees)
Occupational Drivers License	\$10
DWI fine	\$200–\$2,000
Monthly monitoring visits	\$180–\$1,488 (\$15–\$62 a month for 12–24 months)
Alcohol addiction evaluation	\$20–\$250
Alcohol education course	\$25–\$185
Victim impact panel fee	\$15–\$40
Random urine testing	\$15 each time
Vehicle starting device (“ignition interlock”)	\$54–\$150 to install, then \$600–\$2,800 (\$50–\$120 a month for 12–24 months) up to \$4,500 (\$375/month for 12 months)
Ankle monitor	
Fee to keep driver license (surcharge administered by DPS as Driver Responsibility Program)	\$3,120 (\$1,040 a year for three years)
Extended Proof of Insurance (SR-22)	\$75–\$2,400
Auto insurance rate increase	Varies

The ranges presented here represent the highest and lowest ranges from all six counties included in the survey.

### **What are some of the factors that contribute to different costs?**

The fines and bail can vary based on the facts of the case, the prior record of the accused and/or recommendations from the District Attorney. In addition, attorney fees vary based on the location of the case and the experience of the attorney. Additionally, each county in Texas sets its own court costs and other fees (e.g., probation), so these costs vary throughout the state. Also, circumstances of each violator vary, which can affect charges and costs.

The survey based its questions on the assumption that the scenario was a first-time DWI offense citation for someone over the age of 21 with no collision involved. Survey participants responded to survey questions based on their own experience. Because circumstances vary, costs vary. Some offenders may end up paying high costs, while others may pay much less.

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