

ATTENTION DRIVERS!

New Maryland traffic ticket process begins January 1, 2011



On January 1, 2011, a new law goes into effect, and drivers who get a payable traffic ticket in Maryland will no longer be given an automatic trial date to appear in court. Here's how the new Maryland traffic ticket process works: Drivers have three choices when they get a payable traffic ticket, and they must comply within 30 days or risk having their driver's license suspended by the Motor Vehicle Administration.

The three choices:

1. Pay the traffic ticket fine.
2. Ask for a waiver hearing instead of a trial. Waiver hearings are for drivers who don't dispute the ticket, but want to have a judge hear an explanation before being sentenced.
3. Ask for a court date for a trial.

Why did the traffic ticket process change?

In 2010, the Maryland General Assembly passed a new law that says that citizens who get a traffic ticket for an offense that does not require incarceration/jail time must ask for a trial if they want one. Law enforcement agencies asked for the new law because they think it will save money and use police officers' time more efficiently by reducing the number of hours they spend in court for traffic violations.

What is different about the new traffic ticket process?

Before January 1, 2011, Maryland law required that a person getting a payable traffic ticket for an offense that does not require incarceration/jail time automatically receive a court trial date. Now drivers must ask for a trial if they want to dispute a payable traffic ticket.

What kinds of traffic violations are we talking about?

Payable traffic violations. You have a payable traffic violation when the officer checks "This is a payable citation" on the traffic ticket. All payable traffic violations for which no incarceration/jail time is required are covered under the new law. Examples include speeding, failure to obey a traffic signal or sign, or failure to stop for a school bus.

What is another type of traffic violation?

The other type is a "Must Appear" traffic violation. These include violations such as driving while under the influence of alcohol or drugs or driving on a suspended license. These violations are not considered as payable.



What do I do if I get a traffic ticket in December of 2010?

If you get a payable traffic ticket prior to December 31, 2010, you will automatically receive a trial date to appear in court. You may still choose to pay the fine or request a waiver hearing in lieu of a trial.

What do I do if I get a traffic ticket after January 1, 2011?

If you get a payable traffic ticket, you must respond within 30 days. You can

1. pay the full fine,
2. ask for a waiver hearing, or
3. ask for a trial.

How do I pay my traffic ticket?

You can pay the full fine by mail, online by credit card at www.mdcourts.gov/district, by phone with a credit card at 1-800-492-2656, or in person at any District Court of Maryland location.

What are my other choices?

You can ask for a trial date. That means you come to court for a trial, and the police officer comes to your trial to testify.

OR

You can ask for a waiver hearing, which means you plead guilty with an explanation.

A waiver hearing is held before a judge in District Court, but it is not a trial and the officer and witnesses will not be summoned to appear. At the hearing, the judge will hear from you only for the purpose of imposing a sentence.

How do I ask for a trial or a waiver hearing?

Your traffic ticket has instructions about how to pay the fine, ask for a waiver hearing, or ask for a trial date. The traffic ticket also has two boxes, where you can select “Request a Waiver Hearing” or “Request a Trial.” You must mark an option on the ticket and envelope and mail it to the District Court traffic processing center. The address is on the envelope that you got with the ticket.

Where will my trial or waiver hearing be held?

Your trial or waiver hearing will be held at the District Court in the city or county where you got the traffic ticket. If you ask for a waiver hearing or a trial, you will receive a notice by mail with the District Court location and the date and time of your trial or waiver hearing.

What happens if I miss the 30-day time to respond?

The District Court will notify the Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) to suspend your driver’s license. The MVA will send a notice alerting you that you have 15 days to pay the traffic ticket or risk having your driver’s license suspended.



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