

TRAFFIC COURT INFORMATION

Initial Appearance Traffic & Ordinance Cases

If you appear on the date listed on your citation, you will be advised of the nature of the charge and whether or not points are assessed against your driving record. You will be asked to answer to the charge by making a formal plea of **GUILTY, NO CONTEST, or NOT GUILTY**. If necessary, you may request a continuance.

IF YOU PLEAD GUILTY, you are admitting your guilt to the charge on the citation. **IF YOU PLEAD NO CONTEST**, you will be found guilty but you will not be admitting your guilt or any civil liability. This may be important if the violation involved a traffic accident. Upon a plea of guilty or no contest, the Court will find you guilty and review the officer's report to determine the relative degree of seriousness of the violation. The Court will also review your past record. The Court will then impose a penalty in accordance with the law. At this, your initial court appearance, the Court will impose the penalty which it feels is the minimum which would be imposed if you are convicted at any stage of the proceedings. Your citation may already list the minimum forfeiture for the violation.

PAYMENT OF FORFEITURE AND COSTS. Valid personal checks and cash will be accepted. If, because of financial hardship, you are granted time to pay, you will be given written notice of when the payment is due. It is very important that you keep track of the due date. If you can't pay because of poverty you should notify the Court to seek an opportunity to pay in installments. If the penalty is not paid on time the Court may suspend all your driving privileges for up to 1 year, issue a warrant for your arrest, or refer your debt to a collection agency, including an intercept of your tax refund or a wage assignment. Wisconsin law does not allow an occupational license to be issued when driving privileges are taken away for failure to pay the penalty on time.

IF YOU PLEAD NOT GUILTY, your case will be set for an immediate pretrial conference. If not resolved at this pretrial conference, the case will normally then be set for trial.

Points in traffic cases are assessed as of the date of violation, not the date of conviction. If you accumulate 12 points in any 12 month period (determined by violation dates), the Department will suspend or revoke your driving privileges. The length of suspension or revocation will depend upon the total number of points accumulated.

Todd E. Meurer
Municipal Judge

HOW IS THE DOLLAR AMOUNT ON MY TICKET DETERMINED?

The dollar amount written on your ticket is actually a combination of a forfeiture and numerous surcharges and fees. The forfeiture for an offense is a relatively small part of the total penalty that you must pay. For example, if you received a speeding citation, the minimum forfeiture for this offense is \$30. In addition, Wisconsin law requires the citation to include other fees and surcharges totaling \$68.80. The base forfeiture (\$30) and the fees and surcharges (\$68.80) total \$98.80. This is the amount that the officer is required to write on your tickets, if traveling 1-15mph above a 55 mph or less legal limit (65 mph limit has a higher minimum). It is the minimum amount that you must pay for a speeding conviction in the above range.

WHY DO I HAVE TO PAY ALL THESE FEES AND SURCHARGES?

The fees and surcharges that are added to your ticket are set by state statute. The Legislature and the Governor have set the amount of these fees. These fees have increased drastically over the past 20 years.

The officer and the court must abide by state statutes. The officer and the court are not responsible for setting the amount of these fees and surcharges.

WHERE DO THESE FEES GO?

On a typical speeding ticket the minimum ticket amount is broken down as follows:

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|-----------------------------------|----------------|--|
| FORFEITURE | \$30.00 | To county; if state charge, split 50/50 with state |
| 26% PENALTY SURCHARGE | \$7.80 | To state for a law enforcement training fund |
| COURT COSTS | \$38.00 | \$5 to state \$33 to municipality |
| JAIL ASSESSMENT SURCHARGE | \$10.00 | To Sheriff's Office for jail expansion and maintenance |
| DRUG ENFORCEMENT SURCHARGE | \$13.00 | To state crime laboratory |
| TOTAL | \$98.80 | YOU PAY THIS AMOUNT |