



The Bill for Driving While Impaired

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Categories : [Motor Vehicles](#), [Procedure](#), [Sentencing](#)

Tagged as : [costs](#), [DWI](#), [Sentencing](#)

Date : January 16, 2014

A DWI conviction will cost you.

Let's take the case of a typical defendant who has never before been charged with or convicted of DWI. I'll call him Forrest Firsttimer.

Forrest is arrested at a DWI checkpoint. He submits to a breath test, which reports an alcohol concentration of 0.08. Forrest is taken before a magistrate for an initial appearance. The magistrate [revokes Forrest's driver's license](#) for a minimum period of 30 days and releases Forrest on his written promise to appear. Eleven days later, Forrest applies for a limited driving privilege pursuant to [G.S. 20-16.5\(p\)](#). A district court judge issues the privilege. Forrest is required to pay a \$100 processing fee to the clerk upon its issuance. That's the first item on Forrest's bill.

1. \$100 processing fee for pre-trial limited driving privilege ([G.S. 20-20.2](#))

Then, at the end of the 30-day minimum revocation period, Forrest must pay \$100 to end the civil license revocation.

2. \$100 for return of license civilly revoked ([G.S. 20-16.5\(j\)](#))

Forrest hires an attorney to represent him in the impaired driving case. The attorney charges Forrest a flat fee of \$1,000.

3. \$1,000 in attorneys' fees

Forrest pleads guilty in district court. He is sentenced at Level 5, placed on 12 months of supervised probation, and is ordered to pay a \$100 fine, to perform 24 hours of community service and to obtain a [substance abuse assessment](#) and complete the recommended education or treatment.

Forrest now must add the following items to his mounting bill:

4. \$100 fine ([G.S. 20-179\(k\)](#)) (*permitting fine of up to \$200 for Level 5 DWI*)

5. **\$290 in court costs** (*This figure includes (i) the \$190.00 standard costs amount for a Chapter 20 misdemeanor ([G.S. 7A-304\(a\)\(1\)](#) – [\(a\)\(4a\)](#), & [\(a\)\(9\)](#)) plus (ii) the \$100.00 special costs amount for persons sentenced under [G.S. 20-179](#) ([G.S. 7A-304\(a\)\(10\)](#))).*)

6. \$480 in probation supervision fees ([G.S. 15A-1343\(c1\)](#)) (*establishing supervision fee of \$40 per month*)

7. a \$250 community service fee ([G.S. 143B-708\(c\)](#))

8. a \$100 fee to the agency that assesses his substance abuse problem ([G.S. 122C-142.1\(f\)](#))

9. \$160 for the alcohol and drug treatment school ordered as a result of the assessment (G.S. 122C-142.1(f))

Forrest's driver's license is revoked for one year upon his conviction. G.S. 20-17(a)(2); G.S. 20-19(c1). He applies for a limited driving privilege at sentencing. Upon its issuance, he is required to pay \$100.

10. \$100 for post-conviction limited driving privilege (G.S. 20-20.2)

When the revocation year expires, Forrest will be required to pay \$100 for the restoration of his driver's license.

11. \$100 license restoration fee (G.S. 20-7(i1))

Forrest's bill now totals \$2,780, but we haven't taken into account one of his largest expenses—his [increased automobile liability insurance](#). A DWI conviction results in 12 insurance points. That translates to a 340 percent increase in the cost of his coverage. If he paid \$600 in annual insurance premiums before the DWI conviction, his premiums will now total \$2,640.

11. \$2,040 in increased insurance premiums

In total, Forrest's DWI has cost him \$4,820.

And his bill doesn't include many of the substantial charges assessed in some impaired driving cases. Those include the [\\$600.00 lab fee](#) in G.S. 7A-304(a)(7) or (a)(8), the [\\$600.00 lab analyst testimony fee](#) in G.S. 7A-304(a)(11) and (a)(12), jail fees of \$10 per day for pretrial confinement and \$40 a day for imprisonment under a split sentence ([G.S. 7A-313](#)), and the costs of [ignition interlock](#) and [continuous alcohol monitoring](#).

All this makes cab fare look pretty cheap.