

CHAPTER 5: LAWS AND RELATED ISSUES

This chapter will provide information you need to know about recent Pennsylvania laws or other relevant driver related laws.

For more information on Pennsylvania laws please visit www.dmv.state.pa.us, select laws and regulations listed under Information Centers.

REQUIRED NOTIFICATION FOR CHANGE IN NAME OR ADDRESS

In accordance with Section 1515 of the Pennsylvania Vehicle Code, if your name or address is changed, you must notify PennDOT within 15 days of that change even if moving out of state. You may report your address change by visiting our website at www.dmv.state.pa.us or calling our Customer Call Center at 1-800-932-4600. The Pennsylvania Vehicle Code prohibits the issuance of driver license products to anyone who is not a resident of Pennsylvania. By law, if you are a registered voter in Pennsylvania, this application will allow us to notify your county voter registration office of your address change. You may change your name by completing a Non-Commercial Driver's License Application for Change/Correction/Replacement (Form DL-80) available on the website. You will be issued a driver's license update card containing the new information. This card must be carried with your driver's license. There is no fee for this service for non-commercial drivers.

SEAT BELT LAW

In accordance with Section 4581 of the Pennsylvania Vehicle Code, it is a law in Pennsylvania that:

- All drivers and front seat passengers in vehicles, light trucks and motor homes must wear seat belts.
- If you are transporting passengers age eight (8) or older but less than age 18, they must wear seat belts, no matter where they are riding in the vehicle.
- If you are a driver under the age of 18, the number of passengers may not exceed the number of seat belts in the vehicle.

YOU ARE REQUIRED BY LAW TO BUCKLE UP. It makes good sense to wear your seat belt.

Many people believe they would be able to use their arms and legs to stop themselves from hitting the vehicle's surfaces in a crash, but they are wrong. In a collision, your vehicle stops, but your body keeps moving at the same speed you were traveling until it hits the instrument panel or windshield. In most crashes, the bodies of the passengers and drivers hit the vehicle's interior surfaces with several tons of force. This will shatter even the strongest arms and legs. At 30 mph, this is like hitting the ground from the top of a three-story building. This is why you cannot catch yourself with your arms. A driver or passenger who is not buckled up, can be killed on impact even when the vehicle is traveling as slowly as 12 mph.

Only seat belts can safely slow your body. You have only 1/50th of a second to stop your body after the vehicle crashes. Arms and legs do not work that quickly, but seat belts do. Seat belts slow your body down far more gently than a hard instrument panel, steering wheel or windshield does. During a crash, fastened seat belts distribute the forces of rapid deceleration over larger and stronger parts of your body such as the chest, hips and shoulders. Air bags provide an even greater "ride down" benefit. However, even with an air bag present, a seat belt must be worn.

Seat belts also keep you inside of your vehicle. Your chances of being killed are almost 25 times greater if you are thrown from your vehicle. Being thrown clear usually means going through the windshield and then landing somewhere - hard. The forces in a collision can be great enough to fling you as much as 150 feet (about 15 vehicle lengths). If you land in the street, there is always the chance of being run over while you lie there. Four (4) out of every five (5) people who were killed by being thrown clear would have lived, if they had been able to stay inside the vehicle.

Seat belts and air bags save lives. They work best when everyone is buckled and children are properly restrained in the back seat.

CHILD RESTRAINT LAW

Vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death and injury to children in the United States. In Pennsylvania each year, approximately 7,000 children under five (5) years of age are involved in crashes.

CHILD PASSENGER PROTECTION ACT 229 REQUIRES

- Children under the age of four (4) must be buckled into a federally-approved child passenger restraint system (child safety seat), which must be secured to the vehicle by the seat belt system (or using the vehicle's LATCH system, available in newer vehicles), no matter where they ride in the vehicle (front or back seat).
- Children ages four (4) and older, but under the age of eight (8) must be buckled into a federally-approved child booster seat, which must be secured to the vehicle by the seat belt system, no matter where they ride in a vehicle (front or back seat). Booster seats must be used in conjunction with lap and shoulder belts.
- Children ages eight (8) and older, but under age 18 must be buckled in a seat belt, no matter where they ride in the vehicle (front or back seat).
- Drivers are responsible for securing children into an approved child passenger restraint system and ensuring children under age 18 are buckled up.

VIOLATORS MAY BE FINED AND WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL COURT COSTS.

Children who weigh less than 20 pounds and are under one (1) year of age should ride in rear-facing child safety seats. In fact, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children ride rear-facing for as long as possible in rear-facing seats designed to accommodate weights up to 35 pounds. **Never install a rear-facing child safety seat in the front seat if an air bag is present.** In a crash, the air bag will hit the back of the child seat with tremendous force, which will be transmitted to the infant's head causing severe injury or death.

If you are transporting children under age eight (8) who, by law, must ride in federally-approved child safety seats or booster seats, read your vehicle owner's manual and the directions that came with the seat so you know how to tightly attach the seat to your vehicle's seat and how to secure the children snugly in their child seats.

AIR BAG SAFETY INFORMATION

- Air bags are supplemental protection devices. Lap and shoulder belts should always be worn. Wear the seat belt snugly across your hips and the shoulder strap across your chest away from your neck.
- Driver and front passenger seats should be moved as far back as practical, particularly for shorter people. You should sit as far away from the air bag compartment as possible, without compromising your ability to reach and operate the gas and brake pedals, and controls on the instrument panel and steering column. To be safe, in case the air bag deploys, you should be at least 10 inches away from the steering wheel.
- Hold the steering wheel at the 9 and 3 o'clock or 8 and 4 o'clock positions. This will keep your wrists and arms from being injured or broken or forcibly hitting you in the face, if the air bag deploys. Also, keep your thumbs on the top or outside rim of the wheel, instead of gripping the inside of the wheel.
- Infants in rear-facing safety seats should **never** ride in the front seat of a vehicle with a passenger side air bag.
- It is recommended that all children ages 12 and under ride in the rear seat. There are two (2) reasons for this: first, most collisions are frontal collisions, so placing children in the back seat moves them farther away from the point of impact; second, children tend to fidget in their seats and may get too close to the air bag compartment if they are in a front seat, putting them at risk of injury in the event the air bag deploys during a crash.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA)

In order to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, PennDOT has made all Driver License Centers and Photo License Centers accessible to physically disabled individuals. In addition, the following services are available to people who want to take the Knowledge and Road Test and have a hearing or reading impairment.

INTERPRETERS FOR THE DEAF AND HEARING IMPAIRED

PennDOT's Bureau of Driver Licensing will provide an interpreter upon request for individuals who are hearing impaired and communicate through the use of sign language. This service is available for customers who want to take the driver's Knowledge and/or Road Test or have to take a special point exam.

IN ORDER FOR AN INTERPRETER TO BE PRESENT YOU MUST

1. Call 1-800-932-4600 to schedule an appointment to take your test. If you use a TDD, you should call 1-800-228-0676 (out-of-state TDD users should call 1-717-412-5380). Indicate at which Driver License Center you want to take the test and give at least three (3) dates you will be able to take the test.

When setting up an appointment to take your test, you may also use the Pennsylvania Relay Service. This service provides telephone communication between a person who has a TDD system and one who does not. This system uses an operator to act as a go between for calls between hearing and non-hearing parties. If you have a TDD system, you should use 1-800-654-5984 when accessing the Pennsylvania Relay Service. If you are accessing the service as a hearing caller, you should use 1-800-654-5988. When an interpreter has been hired to assist you with your test, you will be called back to have your test date confirmed.

2. When making your appointment, you should indicate if there is a type of sign language you prefer to use. The types available are:
 - American Sign Language (ASL)
 - Pidgin Sign Language (PSE)
 - Signed Exact English (SEE)
 - An oral interpreter (a person who reads lips)

Make your initial contact with PennDOT at least two (2) weeks prior to the time you want to take the test, and PennDOT will do its best to secure a person who signs in your preference.

ALTERNATIVE TESTING METHOD

Some people who take the Knowledge Test may have trouble reading or in some cases, may not be able to read and would feel more comfortable if the test were read to them. Upon request, voice tests are offered at all Driver License Centers across the commonwealth.

PARKING AREAS FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

According to Pennsylvania law, there are two (2) conditions necessary before an individual may legally park in a designated parking area for persons with disabilities:

1. The vehicle being parked must display a disabled person or disabled veteran registration plate/parking placard.
2. The vehicle must be operated by or for the transportation of the disabled person or severely disabled veteran.

Any vehicle unlawfully parked in a parking area for disabled persons may be removed from that area by towing and reclaimed upon payment of the towing costs. This parking violation is a summary offense. Individuals convicted of this offense will be fined between \$50 and \$200.

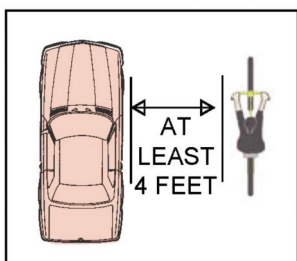
ANTI-LITTERING LAW

It is against the law to drop, throw or deposit upon any highway, upon any other public or private property (without the consent of the owners thereof) or into or on the waters of this commonwealth, from a vehicle, any waste paper, sweepings, ashes, household waste, glass, metal, refuse or rubbish or any dangerous or detrimental substance, or permitting any of the preceding without immediately removing such items or causing their removal. A violation of this law, including any violation resulting from the conduct of any other persons present within any vehicle of which you are the driver, may result in a fine of up to \$300 upon conviction.

VEHICLE SAFETY AND EMISSIONS INSPECTION

Your vehicle must have a safety inspection at an authorized inspection station every 12 months. The date on the sticker tells you when your vehicle must be inspected again. A vehicle may be inspected up to 90 days before its next expiration date. Also, if a police officer notices faulty equipment on your vehicle, you may be required to fix it within five (5) days to avoid a citation. In many counties, you must also get the emissions control system for your car, van or light-duty truck (model year 1975 or newer) inspected before you can complete your safety inspection. Emissions inspections are performed at privately owned businesses certified by PennDOT. Call the Emissions Customer Hotline at 1-800-265-0921 to learn about the requirements in your county.

SAFE PASSING IS THE LAW



1. Before passing, you must first decide whether you can maneuver around the bicyclist. Be sure to check for oncoming traffic. When passing, you **must allow at least four (4) feet** between your vehicle and a bicycle in order to pass safely. If necessary and if you can do it safely, you are permitted to cross the center double yellow line so you can maintain the four (4) feet of clearance between your vehicle and the bicycle.
2. Unless making a left turn, bicyclists traveling more slowly than passing vehicles must keep to the right side of the roadway and must travel in the same direction as the rest of traffic. However, this requirement is waived on roads with a single lane in each direction.
3. When there is only one travel lane, bicyclists may use any portion of the lane to avoid hazards on the roadway, including keeping a safe distance from stopped and parked cars.
4. Drivers cannot turn into the path of a bicyclist who is riding straight ahead on a roadway or shoulder.
5. You cannot force a bicyclist off the road. If you do this, you may face criminal charges.
6. Bicyclists are considered to be vehicle operators and are expected to obey all traffic laws; however, they may travel at less than the posted minimum speed and may not be cited for impeding traffic. Bicyclists may operate on a shoulder or berm, but are not required to do so.

ANTI-TEXTING LAW

The law went into effect March 8, 2012, and violating the law is a primary, summary offense with convictions carrying a \$50 fine.

What the Law Does

- Defines an Interactive Wireless Communication Device (IWCD) as a wireless phone, personal digital assistant, smart phone, portable or mobile computer or similar devices that can be used for texting, instant messaging, emailing or browsing the Internet.
- Defines a text-based communication as a text message, instant message, email or other written communication composed or received on an IWCD.
- Makes clear that this law supersedes and preempts any local ordinances restricting the use of interactive wireless devices by drivers.

The law does not authorize the seizure of an IWCD. The texting ban does not include the use of a GPS device, a system or device that is physically or electronically integrated into the vehicle, or a communications device that is affixed to a mass transit vehicle, bus or school bus.

OBEDIENCE TO TRAFFIC-CONTROL DEVICES WARNING OF HAZARDOUS CONDITIONS LAW

This law, which went into effect on September 6, 2012, makes it illegal to drive around or through signs or traffic control devices closing a road or highway due to hazardous conditions, like flooded roadways. A conviction for violation of this law results in 2 points added to your driving record and a fine of up to \$250. Additionally, if emergency responders are called out because of your actions, the fine is increased to up to \$500 and you will be held liable for repaying the emergency response costs.