



Texas Department of Public Safety

Information for the News Media

Media Relations Office

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DPS announces indigency rule for Driver Responsibility Program, improves online access to DRP customer accounts

The Texas Department of Public Safety has published proposed new rules for the Driver Responsibility Program (DRP) to address the program's financial impact on low-income individuals who are living at or below the poverty level.

The Driver Responsibility law, passed during the 78th Texas Legislature, established a system to assess surcharges based on certain traffic offenses that occurred on or after September 1, 2003. The 81st Texas Legislature amended the law to require a reduction for indigent individuals.

Surcharges due every year for three years include convictions for:

- Failure to maintain insurance and driving while license invalid—\$250 per year
- Driving without a valid license—\$100 per year
- DWI-related offense
 - \$1,000 per year for first offense
 - \$2,000 per year if the court reports an alcohol concentration of .16 or more
 - \$1,500 per year for a subsequent conviction within the three-year period

All charges are cumulative.

The newly proposed rule would:

- Set DRP indigency at 125% of the poverty level.
- Allow electronic application online or by telephone.
- Require applicants to submit supporting documentation.
- Allow the Department to contract with a third party for application verification.
- Mandate a letter of approval or denial be mailed to any applicant.
- Provide applicants 90 days to pay the reduced fee, in full, and provide proof of insurance.

The Public Safety Commission voted to repeal the existing administrative rule (Subchapter J, §15.163), and replace it with the proposed indigency reductions. The proposed rule was published in the *Texas Register* on March 5, 2010 (<http://www.sos.state.tx.us/texreg/index.shtml>), and the Department will accept comments on the proposed rule for 30 days. The *Texas Register* posting includes information on how to submit comments.

Read about DPS online at www.txdps.state.tx.us

In addition to accepting public comments, the Department will conduct a public hearing on the proposed rule at a later date.

Account Information Now Available Online

The DRP website has added new features that allow customers online access to their account information. The website has provided online payment options and information about surcharges, but several updates now provide customers with immediate access to their information 24 hours a day:

- Account information is available for all surcharges assessed a customer.
- The convenience fee for credit and debit card payments has been lowered.
- The format of the home page and Frequently Asked Questions is more user-friendly.

Customers can visit www.txsurchargeonline.com to access the new online services.

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