



The Driver Responsibility Program and Trauma Funding

The Driver Responsibility Program provides an important source of funding to support the statewide trauma system. It holds bad drivers – who cause much of the trauma care provided – accountable for their actions. A strong statewide trauma system benefits all Texans.

What is the Texas Driver Responsibility Program?

In 2003, the Driver Responsibility Program (DRP) was created; it established a system that assesses points and surcharges on certain traffic offenses. It targets repeat offenders and unsafe drivers, such as those who drive under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Surcharges are applied to offenders after receiving a set number of points OR automatically for convictions, such as DUI and others defined by law. Drivers must pay annual surcharges ranging from \$100 to \$2,000 or their license will be suspended.

How much money has been collected since 2004, and how much is outstanding?

- Total fines billed: \$2 Billion
- Total revenue collected: \$833 Million
- Total revenue uncollected: \$1.2 Billion

Where does the money go?

DRP surcharges are distributed to Account 5111 the “Designated Trauma Facility and Emergency Medical Services Account” (49.5%) and the General Revenue fund (49.5%). The remaining 1 percent goes to DPS for administration of the program.

- **Trauma Centers**
 - Account 5111 accumulated approximately \$120 million in 2009, of which almost \$84 million came from DRP.¹
 - DRP was expected to bring in \$85.5 million to Account 5111 in 2010.²
 - The revenue from DRP has resulted in the designation of 70 new trauma centers in Texas since the law took effect.³
 - DRP provides 83 percent of uncompensated funding for trauma care centers.⁴
 - Since 2003, trauma centers in Texas hospitals have received nearly \$340 million from the surcharge funds.⁵
- **What’s at stake: Importance of trauma funding**
 - Eliminating statewide funding shifts the financial burden to local taxpayers (hospital districts) and the privately insured.
 - A strong trauma system benefits EVERYONE. Having health insurance coverage does not guarantee access to emergency/trauma care.

¹ Department of State Health Services

² Department of State Health Services

³ Becca Aaronson, “DRP Helps Trauma Centers Save Lives, Supporters Say,” *Texas Tribune*, 2/22/11

⁴ Terrence Stutz, “Texas’ steep surcharges for driving violations clog courts, increase DWI dismissals, ex-judge tells panel,” *Dallas Morning News*, 4/27/10

⁵ Brandi Grissom, “Driven to Repeal,” *Texas Tribune*, 3/15/10

- Texas needs a strong statewide trauma system. (Access to trauma care in rural areas is important.)
- People who cause the majority of trauma should be held responsible, which is the purpose of DRP. It is personal accountability. Texas must enforce traffic laws. If an individual obeys the law, then the fines/surcharges will not be a problem.

Drivers have options.⁶

- **Drivers have 30 days after notices are sent to make a payment or payment arrangements.**
 - Drivers who have defaulted on their payments to DRP receive a letter from DPS advising them of the re-entry option.
 - DPS calls drivers whose payments are overdue to remind them that their surcharge payments are due.
 - Amnesty, Incentive, and Indigency programs allow customers who can prove they are complying with the law to pay smaller annual surcharges.
- **Revised Amnesty, Incentive, and Indigency Programs**
 - **Amnesty Program**
 - DPS may reduce annual surcharges related to ‘Failure to Maintain Liability Insurance’ if the customer maintains liability insurance and to ‘Driving without a Valid License’ if the customer obtains a valid driver license. New revisions to this program will reduce the surcharge amount to 10 percent of the total owed, but not more than \$250. DPS will rescind drivers' license suspensions for those who do pay.
 - To date, 83,500 individuals have enrolled in the Amnesty Program (of 713,444 eligible for a 12% participation rate), and \$2,878,559.23 has been received.
 - **Incentive Program**
 - DPS will reduce surcharges from ‘Driving While Intoxicated’ and ‘Driving While License Invalid’ if the customer complies with the surcharge program and does not receive additional traffic convictions.
 - **Indigency Program**
 - Starting January 2011, indigent people have an opportunity to pay 10 percent of what they owe, but no more than \$250, and their license suspensions will be rescinded upon payment.
 - The indigency program applies to those whose income is 125 percent of the poverty level (about \$27,562 per year for a family of four) or less.

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⁶ Department of Public Safety