

August 6th, 2012

Amended DUI Laws in Washington State

A number of additions to the [DUI laws](#) went into effect this August. The new laws will raise penalties as well as add to the list of substances prohibited while driving. “Spice,” a synthetic form of marijuana, and “huffing,” the practice of inhaling household products, such as gasoline or emptied aerosol cans, will now be recognized as intoxicants subject to DUI penalties.

Darr Kirk, Captain of the Kelso Police Department and a member of the Washington State Traffic Safety Commission, emphasized the importance of including less recognized and often legal chemicals in the DUI laws. “If they’re affected, and they’ve got a chemical in their system — not just drugs — they could still be held responsible” under the new laws, he said. Kirk hopes police have made the point that drivers should avoid anything that impairs their judgment.

The law now requires that blood be drawn for suspected offenders who have received four or more offenses in the last ten years. In addition, those convicted of a DUI can now be asked to pay up to \$2,500 to the emergency response fund, \$1000 more than the previous maximum. The new laws will also expand the use of ignition interlock devices. These laws will require company vehicles used by convicted drivers to have interlock devices installed. In order to prevent fraud, interlock devices will be equipped with cameras to take pictures of those giving breath samples.

The new DUI laws will join the new “child in vehicle” laws, which went into effect on June 7th. The amended “child in vehicle” laws raised the penalties for intoxicated drivers with passengers under the age of 16. Shannon Miller of the Cowlitz Substance Abuse Coalition called these additions to the law “a huge opportunity for law enforcement to make our streets safer.” Law enforcement hope that these stricter penalties will result in fewer offenses.

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