

Crime Prevention News

To Enhance the Safety of Faculty, Staff and Students

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Iowa's Traffic Laws

When you are driving, pay attention. Whether it is a short trip to the store, or a roadtrip to another state, one of the most important things to do is to pay attention. Often we can become dis-

tracted, or just become complacent while driving.

After all, we do this everyday, so why should we give it any "real" thought? The facts are there were 447 accident related fatalities for the year of 2000-2001 in Iowa. (1). Some of these may have been prevented. Driving is a divided attention task, you have to steer, brake and watch traffic not to mention turning the stereo up or down rolling down a window, turning your lights on, signaling for a turn, watching people, or talking on the cell phone. Many of these traffic accidents and fatalities could have been prevented by implementing "defensive driving". Paying close attention to your surroundings while driving and being knowledgeable about the traffic laws of Iowa could save a traffic accident from occurring. Following are some Iowa traffic Laws as they read in *The Code of Iowa*. (2)

321.256 Obedience to official traffic-control devices.

No driver of a vehicle shall disobey the instructions of any official traffic-control device placed in accordance with the provisions of this chapter, unless at the time otherwise directed by a peace officer subject to the exceptions

granted the driver of an authorized emergency vehicle.

321.277A Careless driving.

A person commits careless driving if the person intentionally operates a motor vehicle on a public road or highway in any one of the following ways:

1. Creates or causes unnecessary tire squealing, skidding, or sliding upon acceleration or stopping.
2. Simulates a temporary race.
3. Causes any wheel or wheels to unnecessarily lose contact with the ground.

4. Causes the vehicle to unnecessarily turn abruptly or sway.

321.277 Reckless driving.

Any person who drives any vehicle in such manner as to indicate either a willful or a wanton disregard for the safety of persons or property is guilty of reckless driving.

Every person convicted of reckless driving shall be guilty of a simple misdemeanor.

Continued on the next six pages. You may view the entire article at our web site. This article only includes a partial overview of Iowa Traffic Laws.



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321.324 Operation on approach of emergency vehicles.

Upon the immediate approach of an authorized emergency vehicle with any lamp or device displaying a red light or red and blue lights, or an authorized emergency vehicle of a fire department displaying a blue light, or when the driver is giving audible signal by siren, exhaust whistle, or bell, the driver of every other vehicle shall yield the right-of-way and shall immediately drive to a position parallel to, and as close as possible to, the right hand edge or curb of the highway clear of any intersection and shall stop and remain in such position until the authorized emergency vehicle has passed, except when otherwise directed by a police officer. For the purposes of this section, "red light" or "blue light" means a light or lighting device that, when illuminated, will exhibit a solid flashing or strobing red or blue light.

Upon the approach of an authorized emergency vehicle, as above stated, the driver of every streetcar shall immediately stop such car clear of any intersection and keep it in such position until the authorized emergency vehicle has passed, except when otherwise directed by a police officer.

This section shall not operate to relieve the driver of an authorized emergency vehicle from the duty to drive with due regard for the safety of all persons using the highway.

321.285 Speed restrictions.

Any person driving a motor vehicle on a highway shall drive the same at a careful and prudent **speed** not greater than nor less than is reasonable and proper, having due regard to the traffic, surface, and width of the highway and of any other conditions then existing, and no person shall drive any vehicle upon a highway at a **speed** greater than will permit the person to bring it to a stop within the assured clear distance ahead, such driver having the right to assume, however, that all persons using said highway will observe the law.

The following shall be the lawful **speed** except as provided by this section, or except as posted pursuant to sections 262.68, 321.236, subsection 5, section 321.288, subsection 6, sections 321.289, 321.290, 321.293, 321.295, and 461A.36, and any **speed** in excess thereof shall be unlawful:

1. Twenty miles per hour in any business district.
2. Twenty-five miles per hour in any residence or school district.
3. Forty-five miles per hour in any suburban district. Each school district as defined in subsection 70 of section 321.1 shall be marked by distinctive signs as provided by the current manual of uniform traffic control devices adopted by the department and placed on the highway at the limits of such school district.
4. Notwithstanding any other **speed** restrictions, the **speed** limit for all vehicular traffic shall be fifty-five miles per hour.
5. Reasonable and proper, but not greater than fifty-five miles per hour at any time between sunrise and sunset, and not greater than fifty miles per hour at any time between sunset and sunrise, on secondary roads unless such roads are surfaced with concrete or asphalt or a combination of both, in which case the **speed** limits shall be the same as provided in subsection 4 of this section. When the board of supervisors of any county shall determine upon the basis of an engineering and traffic investigation that the **speed** limit on any secondary road is greater than is reasonable and proper under the conditions found to exist at any intersection or other place or upon any part of a secondary road, the board shall determine and declare a reasonable and proper **speed** limit at the intersection or other part of the secondary road. The **speed** limits as determined by the board of supervisors shall be effective when appropriate signs giving notice of the **speed** limits are erected by the board of supervisors at the intersection or other place or part of the highway.



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6. Notwithstanding any other **speed** restrictions, the **speed** limit for all vehicular traffic on fully controlled-access, divided, multilaned highways including the national system of interstate highways is sixty-five miles per hour. The department may establish a **speed** limit of sixty-five miles per hour on certain divided, multilaned highways. However, the department or cities with the approval of the department may establish a lower **speed** limit upon such highways located within the corporate limits of a city. For the purposes of this subsection, a fully controlled-access highway is a highway that gives preference to through traffic by providing access connections with selected public roads only and by prohibiting crossings at grade or direct private driveway connections. A minimum **speed** may be established by the department on the highways referred to in this subsection if warranted by engineering and traffic investigations.

It is further provided that any kind of vehicle, implement, or conveyance incapable of attaining and maintaining a **speed** of

forty miles per hour shall be prohibited from using the interstate system.

321.445 Safety belts and safety harnesses—use required.

1. Except for motorcycles or motorized bicycles, 1966 model year or newer motor vehicles subject to registration in Iowa shall be equipped with safety belts and safety harnesses which conform with federal motor vehicle safety standard numbers 209 and 210 as published in 49 C.F.R. § 571.209-571.210 and with prior federal motor vehicle safety standards for seat belt assemblies and seat belt assembly anchorages applicable for the motor vehicle's model year.

2. The driver and front seat occupants of a type of motor vehicle which is subject to registration in Iowa, except a motorcycle or a motorized bicycle, shall each wear a properly adjusted and fastened safety belt or safety harness any time the vehicle is in forward motion on a street or highway in this state except that a child under six years of age shall be secured as required under section 321.446.

This subsection does not apply to:

a. The driver or front seat occupants of a motor vehicle which is not required to be equipped with safety belts or safety harnesses.

b. The driver and front seat occupants of a motor vehicle who are actively engaged in work which requires them to alight from and reenter the vehicle at frequent intervals, providing the vehicle does not exceed twenty-five miles per hour between stops.

c. The driver of a motor vehicle while performing duties as a rural letter carrier for the United States postal service. This exemption applies only between the first delivery point after leaving the post office and the last delivery point before returning to the post office.

d. Passengers on a bus.

e. A person possessing a written certification from a health care provider licensed under chapter 148, 150, 150A, or 151 on a form provided by the department that the person is unable to wear a safety belt or safety harness due to physical or medical reasons. The certification shall specify the time period for which the exemption applies. The time period shall not exceed twelve months, at which time a new certification may be issued unless the certifying health care provider is from a United States military facility, in which case the certificate may specify a longer period of time or a permanent exemption.

f. Front seat occupants of an authorized emergency vehicle while they are being transported in an emergency. However, this exemption does not apply to the driver of the authorized emergency vehicle.

During the six-month period from July 1, 1986 through December 31, 1986, peace officers shall issue only warning citations for violations of this subsection, except this does not apply to drivers subject to the federal motor carrier safety regulation 49 C.F.R. § 392.16.

The department, in cooperation with the department of public safety and the department of education, shall establish educational programs to foster compliance with the safety belt and safety harness usage requirements of this subsection.

3. The driver and front seat passengers may be each charged separately for improperly used or nonused equipment under subsection 2. The owner of the motor vehicle may be charged for equipment violations under subsection 1.

4. *a.* The nonuse of a safety belt or safety harness by a person is not admissible or material as evidence in a civil action brought for damages in a cause of action arising prior to July 1, 1986.

b. In a cause of action arising on or after July 1, 1986, brought to recover damages arising out of the ownership or operation of a motor vehicle, the failure to wear a safety belt or safety harness in violation of this section shall not be considered evidence of comparative fault under section 668.3, subsection 1. However, except as provided in

section 321.446, subsection 6, the failure to wear a safety belt or safety harness in violation of this section may

be admitted to mitigate damages, but only under the following circumstances:

(1) Parties seeking to introduce evidence of the failure to wear a safety belt or safety harness in violation of this section must first introduce substantial evidence that the failure to wear a safety belt or safety harness contributed

to the injury or injuries claimed by the plaintiff.

(2) If the evidence supports such a finding, the trier of fact may find that the plaintiff's failure to wear a safety belt or safety harness in violation of this section contributed to the plaintiff's claimed injury or injuries, and may reduce the amount of plaintiff's recovery by an amount not to exceed five percent of the damages awarded after any reductions for comparative fault.

5. The department shall adopt rules pursuant to chapter 17A providing exceptions from application of subsections

1 and 2 for front seats and front seat passengers of motor vehicles owned, leased, rented, or primarily used

by persons with physical disabilities who use collapsible wheelchairs.

321.20B Proof of security against liability—driving without liability coverage.

1. Notwithstanding chapter 321A, which requires certain persons to maintain proof of financial responsibility, a person shall not drive a motor vehicle on the highways of this state unless financial liability coverage as defined in section 321.1, subsection 24B, is in effect for the motor vehicle and unless the driver has in the motor vehicle the proof of financial liability coverage card issued for the motor vehicle, or if the vehicle is registered in another state, other evidence that financial liability coverage is in effect for the motor vehicle.

It shall be conclusively presumed that a motor vehicle driven upon a parking lot which is available to the public without charge or which is available to customers or invitees of a business or facility without charge was driven on the highways of this state in order to enter the parking lot, and this section shall be applicable to such a motor vehicle. As used in this section, “*parking lot*” includes access roads, drives, lanes, aisle entrances, and exits to and from a parking lot described in this paragraph.

This subsection does not apply to the operator of a motor vehicle owned by or leased to the United States, this state or another state, or any political subdivision of this state or of another state, or to a motor vehicle which is subject to section 325A.6 or 327B.6.

2. *a.* An insurance company transacting business in this state shall issue to its insured owners of motor vehicles registered in this state a financial liability coverage card for each motor vehicle insured. Each financial liability coverage card shall identify the registration number or vehicle identification number of the motor vehicle insured and shall indicate the expiration date of the applicable insurance coverage. The financial liability coverage card shall also contain the name and address of the insurer or the name of the insurer and the name and address of the insurance agency, the name of the insured, and an emergency telephone number of the insurer or emergency telephone number of the insurance agency.

b. The insurance division and the department, as appropriate, shall adopt rules regarding the contents of financial liability coverage card to be issued pursuant to this section. Notwithstanding the provisions of this section, a fleet owner is not required to maintain in each vehicle a financial liability coverage card with the individual registration number or the vehicle identification number of the vehicle included on the card. Such fleet owner shall be required to maintain a financial liability coverage card in each vehicle in the fleet including information deemed appropriate by the commissioner of insurance or the director, as applicable.

3. If the financial liability coverage for a motor vehicle which is registered in this state is canceled or terminated effective prior to the expiration date indicated on the financial liability coverage card issued for the vehicle, the person to whom the financial liability coverage card was issued shall destroy the card.

4. *a.* If a peace officer stops a motor vehicle registered in this state and the driver is unable to provide proof of financial liability coverage, the peace officer shall do one of the following:

(1) Issue a warning memorandum to the driver.

(2) Issue a citation to the driver. If a citation is issued, the citation shall be issued under this subparagraph unless the driver has been previously charged and cited for a violation of subsection 1. A citation which is issued and subsequently dismissed shall be disregarded for purposes of determining if the driver has been previously charged and cited.

(3) Issue a citation and remove the motor vehicle's license plates and registration receipt. Upon removing the license plates and registration receipt, the peace officer shall deliver the plates for destruction, as appropriate, and forward the registration receipt and evidence of the violation, as determined by the department, to the county treasurer of the county in which the motor vehicle is registered. The motor vehicle may be driven for a time period of up to forty-eight hours after receiving the citation solely for the purpose of removing the motor vehicle from the highways of this state, unless the driver's operating privileges are otherwise suspended.

After receiving the citation, the driver shall keep the citation in the motor vehicle at all times while driving the motor vehicle as provided in this subparagraph, as proof of the driver's privilege to drive the motor vehicle for such limited time and purpose.

(4) (a) Issue a citation, remove the motor vehicle's license plates and registration receipt, and impound the motor vehicle. The peace officer shall deliver the plates for destruction, as appropriate, and forward the registration receipt and evidence of the violation, as determined by the department, to the county treasurer of the county in which the motor vehicle is registered.

(b) A motor vehicle which is impounded may be claimed by a person if the owner provides proof of financial liability coverage and

proof of payment of any applicable fine and the costs of towing and storage for the motor vehicle. If the motor vehicle is not claimed

within thirty days after impoundment, the motor vehicle may be treated as an abandoned vehicle pursuant to section 321.89.

(c) The holder of a security interest in a motor vehicle which is impounded pursuant to this subparagraph shall be notified of the impoundment within seventy-two hours of the impoundment of the motor vehicle and shall have the right to claim the motor vehicle upon the payment of all fees. However, if the value of the vehicle is less than the security interest, all fees shall be divided equally between the lienholder and the political subdivision impounding the vehicle.

b. An owner or driver of a motor vehicle who is charged with a violation of subsection 1 and issued a citation under paragraph "a", subparagraph (3) or (4), is subject to the following:

(1) An owner or driver who produces to the clerk of court, within thirty days of the issuance of the citation under paragraph "a", or prior to the date of the individual's court appearance as indicated on the citation, whichever is earlier, proof that financial liability coverage was in effect for the motor vehicle at the time the person was stopped and cited, or, if the driver is not the owner of the motor vehicle, proof that liability coverage was in effect for the driver with respect to the motor vehicle being driven at the time the driver was stopped and cited, in the same manner as if the motor vehicle were owned by the driver, shall be given a receipt indicating that such proof was provided and be subject to one of the following:

(a) If the person was cited pursuant to paragraph "a", subparagraph (3), the owner or driver shall provide a copy of the receipt to the county treasurer of the county in which the motor vehicle is registered and the owner shall be assessed a fifteen dollar administrative

fee by the county treasurer who shall issue new license plates and registration to the person after payment of the fee.

(b) If the person was cited pursuant to paragraph "a", subparagraph (4), the owner or driver, after the owner provides proof of

financial liability coverage to the clerk of court, may claim the motor vehicle after such person pays any applicable fine and the costs

of towing and storage for the motor vehicle, and the owner or driver provides a copy of the receipt and the owner pays to the county

treasurer of the county in which the motor vehicle is registered a fifteen dollar administrative fee, and the county treasurer shall

issue new license plates and registration to the person.

(2) An owner or driver who is charged with a violation of subsection 1 and is unable to show that financial liability coverage was in effect for the motor vehicle at the time the person was stopped and cited may do either of the following:

(a) Sign an admission of violation on the citation and remit to the clerk of court a scheduled fine as provided in section 805.8, subsection 2, for a violation of subsection 1. Upon payment of the fine to the clerk of court of the county where the citation was issued, payment of a fifteen dollar administrative fee to the county treasurer of the county in which the motor vehicle is registered, and providing proof of payment of any applicable fine and proof of financial liability coverages to the county treasurer of the county in which the motor vehicle is registered, the treasurer shall issue new license plates and registration to the owner.

(b) Request an appearance before the court on the matter. If the matter goes before the court, and the owner or driver is found guilty of a violation of subsection 1, the court may impose a fine as provided in section 805.8, subsection 2, for a violation of subsection 1, or the court may order the person to perform unpaid community service instead of the fine. Upon the payment of the fine or the entry of the order for unpaid community service, the person shall provide proof of payment or entry of such order and the county treasurer of the county in which the motor vehicle is registered shall issue new license plates and registration to the owner upon the owner providing proof of financial liability coverage and paying a fifteen dollar administrative fee to the county treasurer.

c. An owner or driver cited for a violation of subsection 1, who produces to the clerk of court within thirty days of the issuance of the citation proof that financial liability coverage was in effect for the motor vehicle at the time the person was stopped and cited, shall not be convicted of such violation and the citation issued shall be dismissed.

5. If the motor vehicle is not registered in this state and the driver is a nonresident, the peace officer shall do one of the following:

a. Issue a warning memorandum to the driver.

b. Issue a citation. An owner or driver who produces to the clerk of court within thirty days of the issuance of the citation, or prior to the date of the individual's court appearance as indicated on the citation, whichever is earlier, proof that the financial liability coverage was in effect for the motor vehicle at the time the person was stopped and cited, or if the driver is not the owner of the motor vehicle, proof that liability coverage was in effect for the driver with respect to the motor vehicle being driven at the time the driver was stopped and cited in the same manner as if the motor vehicle were owned by the driver, shall be given a receipt indicating that proof was provided, and the citation issued shall be dismissed.

6. This section does not apply to a motor vehicle identified in section 321.18, subsections 1 through 6, and subsection 8.

7. This section does not apply to a lienholder who has a security interest in a motor vehicle subject to the registration requirements of this chapter, so long as such lienholder maintains financial liability coverage for any motor vehicle driven or moved by

the lienholder in which the lienholder has an interest.

8. This section does not apply to a motor vehicle owned by a motor vehicle dealer or wholesaler licensed pursuant to chapter 322.

9. The director of transportation and the commissioner of insurance shall adopt rules pursuant to chapter 17A to administer this