



Southwestern Insurance Information Service

WWW.SIISINFO.ORG

Insurance News

Date: December 30, 2008

Source: Dallas Morning News

Author:

SIIS Office: (512) 795-8214

**SIIS Cell: (512) 965-4001 Jerry
(512) 468-6965 Sandra**

Uninsured Dallas drivers to face towing during traffic stops

By RUDOLPH BUSH / The Dallas Morning News

The new year won't be bringing good tidings to uninsured motorists in Dallas.

Beginning Thursday, a new city ordinance gives police the power to tow cars of uninsured drivers who are stopped for traffic violations.

Dallas Police Lt. Andrew Harvey said there will be no official grace period for drivers once the ordinance goes into effect. The new ordinance has been widely advertised and appeared in the press several times, so people should be aware of it, he wrote in a recent e-mail.

"However, officers may use discretion and will assist citizens whenever possible within reason," he wrote.

Though the law passed in late May, the City Council chose to delay implementation until the new year so a state database of insured motorists could get up and running. That database isn't up yet but is expected to be available for Dallas police after the new year, Lt. Harvey said.

The council split 10-5 in passing the new ordinance, with all three Hispanic council members and two of the council's four black members voting against it. The opponents said they feared that the poor, particularly minorities, would suffer the brunt of the new ordinance.

"In these tough economic times, it's not just going to be immigrant families who are affected. It's going to be a lot of families going through hard times," said council member Steve Salazar.

He also said he fears that officers will find their time stretched even thinner as they wait for tow trucks to arrive for routine traffic stops.

"The number of officers that are going to be able to handle the calls as they come in is going to be tested," he said.

For Additional Information:

8303 N Mopac, Ste B-231
Austin, TX 78759

Phone: (512) 795-8214
Fax: (512) 795-9363



Southwestern Insurance Information Service

WWW.SIISINFO.ORG

Insurance News

District 13 council member Mitchell Rasansky, who proposed the tough new ordinance, said it will make the roads safer.

"I hope this is a wake-up call to people who do not have insurance. Unfortunately, it's years too late, but it's a beginning. It's something that's dreadfully needed to be done to protect everybody," he said.

Mr. Rasansky proposed the ordinance shortly after his own car was struck by a driver who fled the scene and apparently had no insurance.

It's unclear how many motorists will find themselves being towed for lack of insurance. But Mr. Rasansky said he suspects the numbers will be very high because so many people ignore the state's insurance requirements.

Mr. Salazar said he hopes and believes police officers will be careful to give people a chance to learn about the new law before strictly enforcing it.

"We have a lot of good officers who are going to use reasonable judgment in how they enforce the law," he said.

Police Chief David Kunkle has already said that police probably will not, for example, tow a vehicle if it would result in a family with children being stranded at night on the side of a road.

Police will develop formal guidelines for towing exceptions, he said.

For Additional Information:

8303 N Mopac, Ste B-231
Austin, TX 78759

Phone: (512) 795-8214
Fax: (512) 795-9363