



DWI JUST GOT A LITTLE MORE EXPENSIVE

QUESTION: I was arrested for DWI, which is my first offense. The police officer told me that if found guilty I would have to attend alcohol awareness training class and have to place 음주측정 점화장치(Ignition Lock Key) on my vehicle. When I later asked a friend, he said that ignition lock is only required for those caught with high blood alcohol level or second or third DWI. Who is right? I heard that those devices are expensive and a pain to maintain.

ANSWER: The police officer is correct. Effective July 1, 2012, a controversial new law went into effect in Virginia where first time DWI offenders are required to install Ignition Lock Key on every vehicle registered under that person's name. Previously, only repeat offenders or those with high Blood Alcohol Content (above 0.15) were required to install ignition lock.

The cost of the ignition lock is about \$450, which includes one-time installation fee of \$50, monthly rental fee of \$55 for six months, and \$10 monthly review fee. Basically, the device is a two part equipment, where the main part is attached to your vehicle and a small hand-held device (much like a cell phone with a hole to blow into) is attached to the inside of the vehicle. To start your vehicle, you have to blow into the small hand-held device and pass the test. If you pass the initial test, while driving the device will randomly ask you to blow into the device and you have to pull over and conduct the test. If you don't blow on the device while driving, the headlights will flash and the car will honk; thus, making it impossible to drive it further without attracting the attention of everyone, including any police officers.

Once installed, the ignition lock cannot be turned off or removed without the device going into a "lockout" mode. Basically, when the device goes into a lockout mode, you cannot start your vehicle and have to call the service department to give you a temporary code to unlock it for a short duration. Once unlocked, you have to drive it to the service department to have it examined. A lockout mode can also occur if you fail your test three times in a row.

All your data, you pass and fail results, gets recorded on the device. When you go the service department monthly, the service technician will download all the results and send the information to your probation officer. If there are any "fail" test results, the probation officer at the month meeting will ask you to explain them and determine if you violated the condition of your probation and if the court should review your case again.

The ignition lock requirement is in addition to the alcohol awareness training classes you have to attend, which lasts about 10 weeks for 2 hours each session. The fee for ASAP is about \$350. Also, your insurance rate will go up, usually by three fold. This is all assuming that you qualify to apply for restricted license after you are found guilty of DWI, which in some cases you will not qualify or the court will not grant it. You should never drink and drive. But with the new ignition lock requirement, the cost of DWI just got more expensive.