

MAYOR MARVIN'S COLUMN

Last week I wrote in my column about parking, which generated many questions about traffic violations in general. So it seemed prudent to take some time and refresh some of the rules from the Department of Motor Vehicles.

In the unfortunate event that you receive a traffic ticket, failing to address the citation just makes the situation progressively worse. So act as soon as you receive it, whether you choose to contest it or plead guilty and pay the fine.

If you ignore the ticket, or do not pay the fine on a guilty or unsuccessful "not guilty" plea, the court reports your inaction to the Department of Motor Vehicles which then gives you 60 days to resolve the issue before suspending your license. Driving with a suspended license is in itself another violation, and the fines increase. You may even find your car has been towed and impounded.

In Bronxville, non-criminal traffic tickets for infractions such as failing to obey a traffic signal or sign, crossing a double yellow line or using a handheld cell phone while driving, are addressed by the Bronxville Justice Court which meets every Wednesday here at Village Hall. Criminal traffic violations such as DWI or reckless driving are also addressed here.

To plead "Not Guilty" to a traffic citation, read the instructions on the back of the ticket, check "Not Guilty", fill in the requested information, and send it in to the designated address within 15 days of the citation. The Court Clerk will send you information about your scheduled court hearing where you may argue your case.

To plead "Guilty", read the instructions on the back of the ticket, check "Guilty", fill in the requested information, and send it to the address given within 15 days of the citation. The Court Clerk will advise you of the amount of the fine and the surcharge. You will then have two weeks to make payment.

Aside from the fines imposed, if you are found guilty of, or plead guilty to, a traffic citation, there are other, more long-term consequences for being apprehended.

Most moving violation convictions result in points being added to your driving record. You may have your license suspended for accumulating 11 or more points within 18 months.

Examples of some of the point values mandated by the DMV include:

- Speeding (1-10 MPH over posted limit): 3 points
- Speeding (11 – 20 MPH over posted limit): 4 points
- Speeding (21 – 30 MPH over posted limit): 6 points
- Failing to yield Right-of-Way: 3 points
- Failing to stop for a school bus: 5 points
- Violation involving a traffic signal, stop sign or yield sign: 3 points
- Safety restraint violation involving a person under 16: 3 points

Insurance companies can increase your premiums based on your driving record. They check your record when they renew your policy, and sometimes all it takes is one speeding ticket to send your rates skyrocketing.

If you tend to get a lot of tickets, you risk having your insurance cancelled outright if the company decides your driving habits put you at greater odds of becoming involved in an accident. Driving without insurance is illegal in New York and could result in losing not only your driver license but your vehicle's registration as well.

If you accumulate only six points in an 18 month period, you probably will not have your license suspended, but you will be subject to a "driver responsibility assessment" – a fine paid once a year for three years to the DMV. The fine costs \$100 a year for six points plus \$25 a year for each additional point, for three years. Alcohol- or drug-related traffic violations cost \$250 a year for three years.

The parking or meter violation ticket process is quite different. A ticket fine is \$20 if paid within 14 days of issuance. After that the ticket doubles to \$40. A series of three letters are sent requesting payment after which a municipality can file a notice of judgment with the County Clerk. Continued non-payment of the fine after the judgment has been imposed can result in a lien of one's property or the repossession of the vehicle involved by the sheriff's department.

The DMV has no involvement with parking tickets, but if you have \$200.00 or more in unpaid parking ticket fines, you are categorized as a "Scofflaw". One of our police cars is now equipped with a scanner that reads automobile license plates and immediately match the plate against the scofflaw list. Once the outstanding violations are confirmed, the car can be booted and then towed if necessary.

All of the above demonstrate that what first appears as a minor violation can quickly escalate into a situation with major unforeseen consequences.

So please do not hesitate to call Village Hall if you have any questions about violations or the process and act expeditiously to rectify the situation.

One final point of information. Our Parking Enforcement Officers do not have police powers. They cannot issue tickets for traffic violations such as crossing a double yellow line or speeding. Their duty is confined to parking violations only.