

DUI: THE \$10,000 TOAST

ATLANTA - As the New Year approaches, this year's toast to 2011 could cost you approximately \$10,000 for driving under the influence (DUI). In Georgia a Blood Alcohol Content (BAC) of 0.08 grams or more promises jail time, bail, fines, fees and insurance-rate increases even if your actions did not harm anyone.

Each year, Georgia has more than 200,000 DUI arrests with the 5 Atlanta metropolitan counties accounting for more than 20,000 arrests each. According to Century Council, approximately 11,773 people were killed in drunk driving crashes. The penalties are intended to be discouraging and law enforcement officials are cracking down on driving while intoxicated.

Below are just some of the costs associated with DUI arrests:

Bail: Cost: \$150 - \$2,500. Cost of DUI arrests depends on how many offenses you've had and your blood alcohol level.

Towing: Cost: \$50 - \$200. The cost of towing and impounding a car can add up daily. Some cities even auction your car if you can not afford to get your car after 30 days.

Insurance: Cost: \$4,500 or more. One of the biggest hit a drunken driver takes is in insurance premiums, which can likely affect insurance rates for three to five years. Rates can likely double, triple or even quadruple and companies will classify the policy as "high-risk".

Legal fee: Cost \$2,000- \$25,000. Some lawyers charge as little as \$1500 for a quick plea but with so much at stake, many people accused of DUI fight the charge. That's when legal fees start to add up.

Fines: Cost \$300 - \$5000. Depending on your offense and if there have been any other arrests in the past.

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Alcohol evaluation: Cost \$95 - \$300. An evaluation is required of anyone who is sentenced by court for drunken driving.

Alcohol Education and treatment: Cost \$500 - \$4,000 for basic treatment. If you are convicted, you must usually go through an education or treatment program, especially if your license has been

suspended.

License reinstatement fees: Cost \$210 - \$410. If you are convicted of a DUI in Georgia (or any other state), you can expect to face several fees to secure the reinstatement of your driver's license. After you have completed a state-certified risk reduction program, which costs \$287, you can reinstate your Georgia driver's license for a fee of \$210 - \$410.

In addition to the "standard" costs of a DUI conviction, there are some consequences that are more difficult to place a number value upon but can be more devastating to many people. DUI arrests and convictions costs money, time, and can lead to job loss or prevent future employment opportunities.

If you plan to drink, plan for a designated driver. If you have had too much to drink and don't have a designated driver, take a cab or get a sober friend to drive you home. The consequences are sobering!