

Drunk drivers slapped with stiffer penalties

Stiff drinks mean stiffer penalties for drinking drivers since several new laws took effect on April 1, according to Automobile Club of Michigan.

Other new motoring laws would give speeders more penalty points and reduce the required number of license plates on a vehicle from two to one.

The 1980 Michigan Legislature approved several bills designed to make drunk driving arrests easier and increase fines upon conviction.

Former laws provided that "warrant-less arrests" by police officers only

could be made if accidents occurred on a public highway. As of April 1, officers can make such arrests involving accidents on any public road or parking lot if they believe a driver has been drinking.

The new laws expand the principle of "implied consent," meaning that upon receipt of a driver's license, a motorist agrees to take a chemical test if suspected of drinking in "any area open to the general public." The alternative is loss of license.

Also new is a provision which prohibits a person from driving a snowmobile or off-the-road vehicle while under the influence of liquor or drugs.

For the first time in 53 years, lawmakers increased the penalty for drunk driving to a minimum \$100 and maximum \$500 fine, and/or a maximum jail term of 90 days for first offenders. The new fines will replace the current minimum-maximum range of \$50 to \$100.

In a move to conserve gasoline and tighten enforcement of the present 55 mile per hour speed limit, the Legislature approved a law that as of April 1 will assess one penalty point on a motorist's driver's license if convicted of driving between 60 and 69 mph.

Penalty points rise to two for driving 70 to 79 mph, three for 80 to 85 mph, and four for over 85 mph. The law also permits the Governor to adjust the points if he declares a state of emergency and sets a lower speed limit for the state.

In a move to save the Secretary of State's office \$7 million over the next three years, the Legislature eliminated the requirement that motor vehicles carry two license plates. Beginning March 31, passenger cars need only be equipped with one plate on the rear while truck-trailers must have one on the front.

Motoring laws passed by the 1980 Legislature which already have gone into effect are:

- Motorists with six or more parking tickets must pay the fines or face loss of their driver's license or car registration. Local courts will submit records of unpaid fines to the Secretary of State, who in turn will withhold the permits.
- Vehicle owners have the option to register their vehicles for two years instead of one.
- Gasohol is taxed 6 cents per gallon to make it more competitive with unleaded gas, which is taxed 11 cents.

The rate will jump to 8 cents in 1983, 9 cents in 1984 and 11 cents in 1985.

The extra levy of \$2.50 for car registrations and \$6 for title transfers was extended until April 15, 1982.

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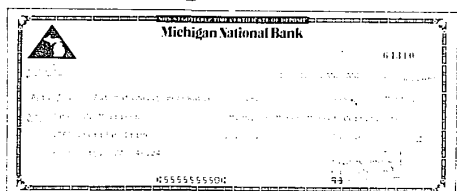
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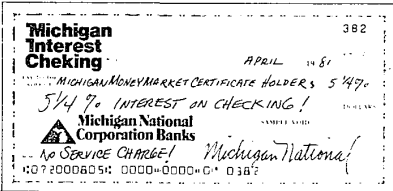
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