



Texas Driving Laws: The 2026 Guide

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Texas Speed Limits



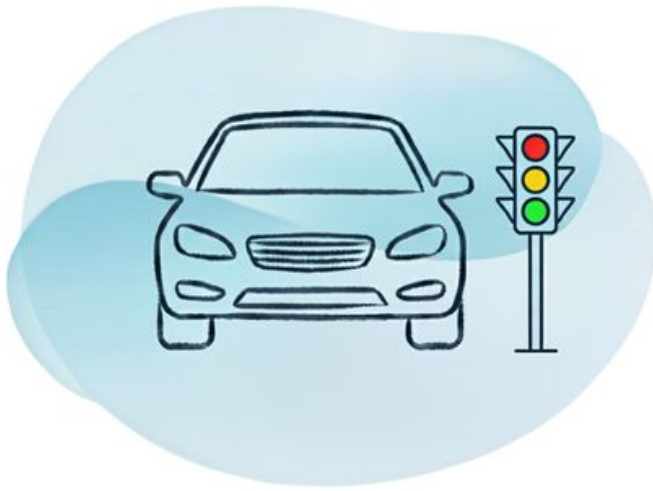
Speeding tickets in Texas can result in fines ranging from about \$200 to over \$300 and points on your license, with increased penalties in school or work zones. And if drivers ignore speed limits in Texas and cause crashes with injuries, they may be responsible for your medical bills, lost wages, pain and suffering, and property damage.

Source: [Texas Speed Limits: What You Need To Know \(2026\)](#)

Texas has some of the highest speed limits in the country, including 70-75 mph on many rural highways and one toll road with a 85 mph limit. Urban streets usually have a 30 mph limit and school zones can drop as low as 15 mph.

But many drivers don't know that the posted limit only applies in ideal conditions. In fact, Texas law requires drivers to slow down further in several circumstances, including rain, fog, heavy traffic, construction zones, and school zones. This is called the "Texas Basic Speed Rule."

Texas Traffic Laws



Texas traffic laws cover everything from right-of-way rules to distracted driving bans. The basic traffic regulations to bear in mind are straightforward:

- Don't drink and drive
- Do yield at uncontrolled intersections
- Don't text while driving
- Don't run red lights or stop signs

In Texas, the legal BAC limit is 0.08 for DWI charges, and, per the Texas Department of Transportation (TXDOT), handheld devices are banned while driving. School zones drop to 20 mph, and you can't pass school buses with flashing red lights from either direction.

Texas also has some unusual traffic laws you might not be aware of: it's illegal to open your door while driving, leave keys in an unattended vehicle, or fail to set the parking brake. And make sure you don't drive with an uncaged bear in your car, because that's illegal too.

Texas is an at-fault state, meaning the driver responsible for your accident should pay for your damages. And drivers in the state must have the following insurance coverage: \$30,000 in bodily injury/person, \$60,000 in bodily injury/accident, and \$25,000 in property damage. When you're injured in a crash, you usually file a claim against the at-fault driver's insurer.

Source: [Texas Traffic Laws: Understand The Basics \(2026\)](#)

Driver's License Requirements



And there's a difference between forgetting your license and never having one. If you forgot your license at home, officers can check and verify that you're licensed. In this case, you may only receive a warning or a small fine. But driving without ever obtaining a license, or with a suspended or revoked license, known as Driving While License Invalid (DWLI), is a serious offense.

Source: [Can You Go To Jail For Driving Without A License In Texas?](#)

Texas requires you to have a valid license to operate a vehicle on public roads. Driving without one is illegal under Texas law, regardless of whether a license is suspended, revoked, expired, or never obtained.

First offenders usually face a \$200 fine, but repeat offenders (or those causing accidents) face much steeper penalties: up to \$4,000 in fines. You could even go to jail for driving without a license in Texas. Unlicensed drivers who cause accidents can be charged with Class A misdemeanors, the highest level of misdemeanor punishment.

Vehicle License Plates



Under Texas license plate laws, you are required to have both front and rear license plates. They must be securely fastened, displayed upright, and mounted at least 12 inches from the ground. Unlike some states that only require rear plates, Texas mandates both to make it easier for law enforcement to identify vehicles, but there are some exceptions. Exempt from requiring front plates are:

- Motorcycles
- Semi trucks
- Trailers

- Road tractors

Your rear plate must be illuminated so it is visible from at least 50 feet at night. Any stickers, decals, or coatings that obscure plates are illegal in Texas, including covers designed to defeat license plate readers or red-light cameras.

If you're not sure about the requirement for your vehicle, check with the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles (TXDMV). And remember, failing to properly display license plates is a misdemeanor offense with fines up to \$200.

Source: [Understanding Texas License Plate Laws \(2026\)](#)

Seat Belt & Child Safety Laws



Texas seat belt laws require everyone in a moving vehicle to wear seat belts if their seat is equipped with one. Those age 15 or older can be personally liable for not wearing a seat belt, while drivers are responsible for younger passengers.

If you're driving with children, they'll also require age-appropriate car seats under the law:

- Rear-facing car seats from birth until age 2
- Front-facing car seats for children over age 2
- Booster seats for ages 4-8 (after exceeding car seat weight limits)
- Booster seats up to age 12 or until reaching 4'9" in height.

Fines range from \$25-\$50 for adults not wearing seat belts, \$100-\$200 for allowing a child to ride without one, and \$25-\$250 for failing to use proper child car seats. Seat belt violations are misdemeanor offenses in Texas. While seat belt laws also apply to rideshare vehicles, the law does not apply to commercial vehicles meant to transport 16 or more people. Other exemptions to the seat belt laws exist for specific situations, such as:

- Drivers with medical conditions
- USPS mail carriers
- Meter readers
- Operators of farm vehicles and solid waste transport vehicles.

Source: [Texas Seat Belt Laws: What You Need to Know \(2026\)](#)

Accident Reporting Requirements



According to Texas Transportation Code §550.062, you must report a crash in Texas if anyone is injured, killed, or if property damage exceeds \$1,000. After an accident, dial 911 and wait for law enforcement to arrive. An attending officer will then draft the accident report.

All law enforcement agencies in Texas must upload reports of crashes involving injury, death, or significant property damage to the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT). You can purchase your crash report through TxDOT's online portal.

Reading a police report can be confusing, as it contains codes that drivers may be unfamiliar with. These standardized codes document injury severity, fault factors, vehicle types, and road conditions. Common codes include: K for fatalities, A for suspected serious injuries, and B for non-incapacitating injuries. Reports may also include specific numbers for contributing factors, such as 60 for unsafe speed or 15 for disregarding traffic signals.

Understanding these codes helps you interpret the officer's findings. For example, if the report shows the other driver was cited for code 15, you know that they violated traffic laws when they hit you.

Source: [Texas Crash Report Codes: Reading Guide \(2025\)](#)

Texas Is Not A Stop And Identify State



So identify yourself, yes, but don't volunteer detailed statements about the accident. After providing your driver's license, you can legally say, "I don't want to discuss what happened without my attorney present." This protects your legal rights while complying with identification laws.

Source: [Is Texas A Stop And Identify State?](#)

Texas is not a "stop and identify" state in the traditional sense. Texas Penal Code § 38.02 requires you to identify yourself to police only in specific situations: if you've been lawfully arrested or if you've been pulled over while operating a vehicle. Texas expanded this statute in 2023 to include traffic stops.

But after a traffic accident, police have reasonable grounds to request identification from all drivers involved. If you refuse, "failure to identify" is a misdemeanor offense in Texas with penalties ranging from a \$500 fine to \$4,000 and up to a year in jail, depending on the circumstances. If you're simply detained as a witness, you may refuse to give your name.

Texas Motorcycle Laws



Helmet Requirements



Texas requires motorcycle helmets only for riders under 21 or those without proper insurance or safety training. So if you're 21 or older, and have completed an approved safety course, and carry adequate insurance coverage, you can legally ride without a helmet.

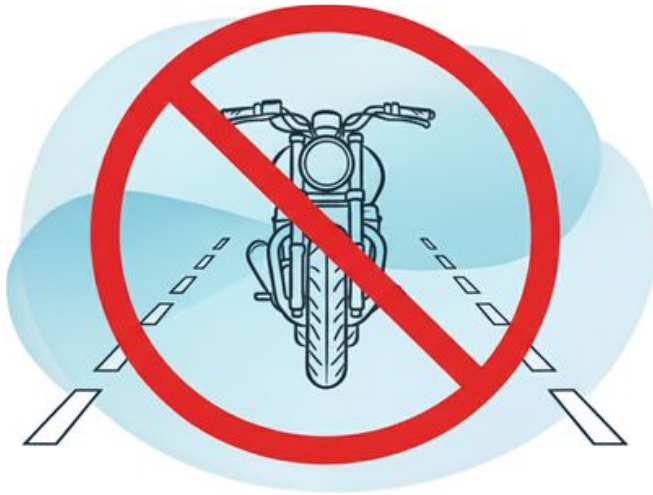
Research shows that motorcyclists who wear helmets reduce their head injury risk by up to 69%. When Texas repealed its universal helmet law, helmet use dropped by 30% while motorcycle fatalities jumped by 21%.

Helmet laws can also influence your insurance and legal claim. Insurance companies know the statistics and may use your choice not to wear a helmet against you. They may argue that your head injuries would have been less severe with a helmet, trying to reduce your payout. If you were legally required to wear a helmet and weren't wearing one when the crash occurred, insurance companies may be even more aggressive in trying to minimize or deny a claim.

Texas, under its modified comparative negligence legal doctrine, does allow you to recover damages even if you weren't wearing a helmet (provided you're 50% or less at fault). But your compensation will be reduced by your degree of fault, which is why hiring an experienced attorney can be crucial in motorcycle accident claims.

Source: [Motorcycle Helmet Laws By State: U.S. Map \(2025\)](#)

Lane Splitting Is Illegal In Texas



A driver caught lane splitting in Texas could face citations for reckless driving, unsafe lane changes, or other traffic violations.

Source: [Lane Splitting and Filtering Laws by State \(2026\)](#)

Lane splitting and lane filtering are both illegal in Texas. Lane splitting typically occurs on busy highways, where riders squeeze between lanes to keep moving while traffic is slow or at a standstill. And you might see lane filtering at busy city intersections, where motorcycles weave through stopped cars to get to the front. But Texas law requires motorcyclists to stay in a single lane just like any other vehicle.

And for good reason: Lane splitting is inherently risky due to the narrow space between lanes and reduced visibility for both motorcyclists and drivers. There's also limited room for error when vehicles make sudden movements.

When To Call A Lawyer

Calling a lawyer is essential for giving you the best chance of recovering what you deserve.

Insurers have teams of lawyers and adjusters whose only job is to pay you as little as possible. They'll offer quick settlements and claim your injuries aren't serious. But you don't have to go it alone.

Here are some scenarios where it's absolutely vital to call a lawyer to protect yourself:

- You've suffered significant injuries
- Settlement offers are insultingly low and won't cover your bills,
- The accident involved a commercial truck
- A relative died in the crash
- You're facing permanent disability or long-term consequences from your injuries
- The insurance company is blaming you for the accident.

[ConsumerShield](#) connects you with experienced Texas attorneys who specialize in fighting for accident victims. These lawyers work on contingency, meaning they only get paid if they win your case.

ConsumerShield Connects You With Texas Attorneys By Vehicle Type:

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