



Ohio Revised Code

Section 4509.101 Operating of motor vehicle without proof of financial responsibility.

Effective: March 23, 2015

Legislation: Senate Bill 255 - 131st General Assembly

(A)(1) No person shall operate, or permit the operation of, a motor vehicle in this state, unless proof of financial responsibility is maintained continuously throughout the registration period with respect to that vehicle, or, in the case of a driver who is not the owner, with respect to that driver's operation of that vehicle.

(2) Whoever violates division (A)(1) of this section shall be subject to the following civil penalties:

(a) Subject to divisions (A)(2)(b) and (c) of this section, a class (F) suspension of the person's driver's license, commercial driver's license, temporary instruction permit, probationary license, or nonresident operating privilege for the period of time specified in division (B)(6) of section 4510.02 of the Revised Code and impoundment of the person's license.

(b) If, within five years of the violation, the person's operating privileges are again suspended and the person's license again is impounded for a violation of division (A)(1) of this section, a class C suspension of the person's driver's license, commercial driver's license, temporary instruction permit, probationary license, or nonresident operating privilege for the period of time specified in division (B)(3) of section 4510.02 of the Revised Code. The court may grant limited driving privileges to the person only if the person presents proof of financial responsibility and has complied with division (A)(5) of this section, and no court may grant limited driving privileges for the first fifteen days of the suspension.

(c) If, within five years of the violation, the person's operating privileges are suspended and the person's license is impounded two or more times for a violation of division (A)(1) of this section, a class B suspension of the person's driver's license, commercial driver's license, temporary instruction permit, probationary license, or nonresident operating privilege for the period of time specified in division (B)(2) of section 4510.02 of the Revised Code. The court may grant limited driving privileges to the person only if the person presents proof of financial responsibility and has complied



with division (A)(5) of this section, except that no court may grant limited driving privileges for the first thirty days of the suspension.

(d) In addition to the suspension of an owner's license under division (A)(2)(a), (b), or (c) of this section, the suspension of the rights of the owner to register the motor vehicle and the impoundment of the owner's certificate of registration and license plates until the owner complies with division (A)(5) of this section.

(3) A person to whom this state has issued a certificate of registration for a motor vehicle or a license to operate a motor vehicle or who is determined to have operated any motor vehicle or permitted the operation in this state of a motor vehicle owned by the person shall be required to verify the existence of proof of financial responsibility covering the operation of the motor vehicle or the person's operation of the motor vehicle under any of the following circumstances:

(a) The person or a motor vehicle owned by the person is involved in a traffic accident that requires the filing of an accident report under section 4509.06 of the Revised Code.

(b) The person receives a traffic ticket indicating that proof of the maintenance of financial responsibility was not produced upon the request of a peace officer or state highway patrol trooper made in accordance with division (D)(2) of this section.

(c) Whenever, in accordance with rules adopted by the registrar, the person is randomly selected by the registrar and requested to provide such verification.

(4) An order of the registrar that suspends and impounds a license or registration, or both, shall state the date on or before which the person is required to surrender the person's license or certificate of registration and license plates. The person is deemed to have surrendered the license or certificate of registration and license plates, in compliance with the order, if the person does either of the following:

(a) On or before the date specified in the order, personally delivers the license or certificate of registration and license plates, or causes the delivery of the items, to the registrar;



(b) Mails the license or certificate of registration and license plates to the registrar in an envelope or container bearing a postmark showing a date no later than the date specified in the order.

(5) Except as provided in division (A)(6) or (L) of this section, the registrar shall not restore any operating privileges or registration rights suspended under this section, return any license, certificate of registration, or license plates impounded under this section, or reissue license plates under section 4503.232 of the Revised Code, if the registrar destroyed the impounded license plates under that section, or reissue a license under section 4510.52 of the Revised Code, if the registrar destroyed the suspended license under that section, unless the rights are not subject to suspension or revocation under any other law and unless the person, in addition to complying with all other conditions required by law for reinstatement of the operating privileges or registration rights, complies with all of the following:

(a) Pays to the registrar or an eligible deputy registrar a financial responsibility reinstatement fee of one hundred dollars for the first violation of division (A)(1) of this section, three hundred dollars for a second violation of that division, and six hundred dollars for a third or subsequent violation of that division;

(b) If the person has not voluntarily surrendered the license, certificate, or license plates in compliance with the order, pays to the registrar or an eligible deputy registrar a financial responsibility nonvoluntary compliance fee in an amount, not to exceed fifty dollars, determined by the registrar;

(c) Files and continuously maintains proof of financial responsibility under sections 4509.44 to 4509.65 of the Revised Code;

(d) Pays a deputy registrar a service fee of ten dollars to compensate the deputy registrar for services performed under this section. The deputy registrar shall retain eight dollars of the service fee and shall transmit the reinstatement fee, any nonvoluntary compliance fee, and two dollars of the service fee to the registrar in the manner the registrar shall determine.

(6) If the registrar issues an order under division (A)(2) of this section resulting from the failure of a person to respond to a financial responsibility random verification request under division (A)(3)(c) of



this section and the person successfully maintains an affirmative defense to a violation of section 4510.16 of the Revised Code or is determined by the registrar or a deputy registrar to have been in compliance with division (A)(1) of this section at the time of the initial financial responsibility random verification request, the registrar shall do both of the following:

(a) Terminate the order of suspension or impoundment;

(b) Restore the operating privileges and registration rights of the person without payment of the fees established in divisions (A)(5)(a) and (b) of this section and without a requirement to file proof of financial responsibility.

(B)(1) Every party required to file an accident report under section 4509.06 of the Revised Code also shall include with the report a document described in division (G)(1)(a) of this section or shall present proof of financial responsibility through use of an electronic wireless communications device as permitted by division (G)(1)(b) of this section.

If the registrar determines, within forty-five days after the report is filed, that an operator or owner has violated division (A)(1) of this section, the registrar shall do all of the following:

(a) Order the impoundment, with respect to the motor vehicle involved, required under division (A)(2)(d) of this section, of the certificate of registration and license plates of any owner who has violated division (A)(1) of this section;

(b) Order the suspension required under division (A)(2)(a), (b), or (c) of this section of the license of any operator or owner who has violated division (A)(1) of this section;

(c) Record the name and address of the person whose certificate of registration and license plates have been impounded or are under an order of impoundment, or whose license has been suspended or is under an order of suspension; the serial number of the person's license; the serial numbers of the person's certificate of registration and license plates; and the person's social security account number, if assigned, or, where the motor vehicle is used for hire or principally in connection with any established business, the person's federal taxpayer identification number. The information shall be recorded in such a manner that it becomes a part of the person's permanent record, and assists the



registrar in monitoring compliance with the orders of suspension or impoundment.

(d) Send written notification to every person to whom the order pertains, at the person's last known address as shown on the records of the bureau. The person, within ten days after the date of the mailing of the notification, shall surrender to the registrar, in a manner set forth in division (A)(4) of this section, any certificate of registration and registration plates under an order of impoundment, or any license under an order of suspension.

(2) The registrar shall issue any order under division (B)(1) of this section without a hearing. Any person adversely affected by the order, within ten days after the issuance of the order, may request an administrative hearing before the registrar, who shall provide the person with an opportunity for a hearing in accordance with this paragraph. A request for a hearing does not operate as a suspension of the order. The scope of the hearing shall be limited to whether the person in fact demonstrated to the registrar proof of financial responsibility in accordance with this section. The registrar shall determine the date, time, and place of any hearing, provided that the hearing shall be held, and an order issued or findings made, within thirty days after the registrar receives a request for a hearing. If requested by the person in writing, the registrar may designate as the place of hearing the county seat of the county in which the person resides or a place within fifty miles of the person's residence. The person shall pay the cost of the hearing before the registrar, if the registrar's order of suspension or impoundment is upheld.

(C) Any order of suspension or impoundment issued under this section or division (B) of section 4509.37 of the Revised Code may be terminated at any time if the registrar determines upon a showing of proof of financial responsibility that the operator or owner of the motor vehicle was in compliance with division (A)(1) of this section at the time of the traffic offense, motor vehicle inspection, or accident that resulted in the order against the person. A determination may be made without a hearing. This division does not apply unless the person shows good cause for the person's failure to present satisfactory proof of financial responsibility to the registrar prior to the issuance of the order.

(D)(1) For the purpose of enforcing this section, every peace officer is deemed an agent of the registrar.



(a) Except as provided in division (D)(1)(b) of this section, any peace officer who, in the performance of the peace officer's duties as authorized by law, becomes aware of a person whose license is under an order of suspension, or whose certificate of registration and license plates are under an order of impoundment, pursuant to this section, may confiscate the license, certificate of registration, and license plates, and return them to the registrar.

(b) Any peace officer who, in the performance of the peace officer's duties as authorized by law, becomes aware of a person whose license is under an order of suspension, or whose certificate of registration and license plates are under an order of impoundment resulting from failure to respond to a financial responsibility random verification, shall not, for that reason, arrest the owner or operator or seize the vehicle or license plates. Instead, the peace officer shall issue a citation for a violation of section 4510.16 of the Revised Code specifying the circumstances as failure to respond to a financial responsibility random verification.

(2) A peace officer shall request the owner or operator of a motor vehicle to produce proof of financial responsibility in a manner described in division (G) of this section at the time the peace officer acts to enforce the traffic laws of this state and during motor vehicle inspections conducted pursuant to section 4513.02 of the Revised Code.

(3) A peace officer shall indicate on every traffic ticket whether the person receiving the traffic ticket produced proof of the maintenance of financial responsibility in response to the officer's request under division (D)(2) of this section. The peace officer shall inform every person who receives a traffic ticket and who has failed to produce proof of the maintenance of financial responsibility that the person must submit proof to the traffic violations bureau with any payment of a fine and costs for the ticketed violation or, if the person is to appear in court for the violation, the person must submit proof to the court.

(4)(a) If a person who has failed to produce proof of the maintenance of financial responsibility appears in court for a ticketed violation, the court may permit the defendant to present evidence of proof of financial responsibility to the court at such time and in such manner as the court determines to be necessary or appropriate. In a manner prescribed by the registrar, the clerk of courts shall provide the registrar with the identity of any person who fails to submit proof of the maintenance of financial responsibility pursuant to division (D)(3) of this section.



(b) If a person who has failed to produce proof of the maintenance of financial responsibility also fails to submit that proof to the traffic violations bureau with payment of a fine and costs for the ticketed violation, the traffic violations bureau, in a manner prescribed by the registrar, shall notify the registrar of the identity of that person.

(5)(a) Upon receiving notice from a clerk of courts or traffic violations bureau pursuant to division (D)(4) of this section, the registrar shall order the suspension of the license of the person required under division (A)(2)(a), (b), or (c) of this section and the impoundment of the person's certificate of registration and license plates required under division (A)(2)(d) of this section, effective thirty days after the date of the mailing of notification. The registrar also shall notify the person that the person must present the registrar with proof of financial responsibility in accordance with this section, surrender to the registrar the person's certificate of registration, license plates, and license, or submit a statement subject to section 2921.13 of the Revised Code that the person did not operate or permit the operation of the motor vehicle at the time of the offense. Notification shall be in writing and shall be sent to the person at the person's last known address as shown on the records of the bureau of motor vehicles. The person, within fifteen days after the date of the mailing of notification, shall present proof of financial responsibility, surrender the certificate of registration, license plates, and license to the registrar in a manner set forth in division (A)(4) of this section, or submit the statement required under this section together with other information the person considers appropriate.

If the registrar does not receive proof or the person does not surrender the certificate of registration, license plates, and license, in accordance with this division, the registrar shall permit the order for the suspension of the license of the person and the impoundment of the person's certificate of registration and license plates to take effect.

(b) In the case of a person who presents, within the fifteen-day period, proof of financial responsibility, the registrar shall terminate the order of suspension and the impoundment of the registration and license plates required under division (A)(2)(d) of this section and shall send written notification to the person, at the person's last known address as shown on the records of the bureau.

(c) Any person adversely affected by the order of the registrar under division (D)(5)(a) or (b) of this section, within ten days after the issuance of the order, may request an administrative hearing before



the registrar, who shall provide the person with an opportunity for a hearing in accordance with this paragraph. A request for a hearing does not operate as a suspension of the order. The scope of the hearing shall be limited to whether, at the time of the hearing, the person presents proof of financial responsibility covering the vehicle and whether the person is eligible for an exemption in accordance with this section or any rule adopted under it. The registrar shall determine the date, time, and place of any hearing; provided, that the hearing shall be held, and an order issued or findings made, within thirty days after the registrar receives a request for a hearing. If requested by the person in writing, the registrar may designate as the place of hearing the county seat of the county in which the person resides or a place within fifty miles of the person's residence. Such person shall pay the cost of the hearing before the registrar, if the registrar's order of suspension or impoundment under division (D)(5)(a) or (b) of this section is upheld.

(6) A peace officer may charge an owner or operator of a motor vehicle with a violation of section 4510.16 of the Revised Code when the owner or operator fails to show proof of the maintenance of financial responsibility pursuant to a peace officer's request under division (D)(2) of this section, if a check of the owner or operator's driving record indicates that the owner or operator, at the time of the operation of the motor vehicle, is required to file and maintain proof of financial responsibility under section 4509.45 of the Revised Code for a previous violation of this chapter.

(7) Any forms used by law enforcement agencies in administering this section shall be prescribed, supplied, and paid for by the registrar.

(8) No peace officer, law enforcement agency employing a peace officer, or political subdivision or governmental agency that employs a peace officer shall be liable in a civil action for damages or loss to persons arising out of the performance of any duty required or authorized by this section.

(9) As used in this section, "peace officer" has the meaning set forth in section 2935.01 of the Revised Code.

(E) All fees, except court costs, fees paid to a deputy registrar, and those portions of the financial responsibility reinstatement fees as otherwise specified in this division, collected under this section shall be paid into the state treasury to the credit of the state bureau of motor vehicles fund established in section 4501.25 of the Revised Code and used to cover costs incurred by the bureau in the



administration of this section and sections 4503.20, 4507.212, and 4509.81 of the Revised Code, and by any law enforcement agency employing any peace officer who returns any license, certificate of registration, and license plates to the registrar pursuant to division (C) of this section.

Of each financial responsibility reinstatement fee the registrar collects pursuant to division (A)(5)(a) of this section or receives from a deputy registrar under division (A)(5)(d) of this section, the registrar shall deposit twenty-five dollars of each one-hundred-dollar reinstatement fee, fifty dollars of each three-hundred-dollar reinstatement fee, and one hundred dollars of each six-hundred-dollar reinstatement fee into the state treasury to the credit of the indigent defense support fund created by section 120.08 of the Revised Code.

(F) Chapter 119. of the Revised Code applies to this section only to the extent that any provision in that chapter is not clearly inconsistent with this section.

(G)(1)(a) The registrar, court, traffic violations bureau, or peace officer may require proof of financial responsibility to be demonstrated by use of a standard form prescribed by the registrar. If the use of a standard form is not required, a person may demonstrate proof of financial responsibility under this section by presenting to the traffic violations bureau, court, registrar, or peace officer any of the following documents or a copy of the documents:

- (i) A financial responsibility identification card as provided in section 4509.103 of the Revised Code;
- (ii) A certificate of proof of financial responsibility on a form provided and approved by the registrar for the filing of an accident report required to be filed under section 4509.06 of the Revised Code;
- (iii) A policy of liability insurance, a declaration page of a policy of liability insurance, or liability bond, if the policy or bond complies with section 4509.20 or sections 4509.49 to 4509.61 of the Revised Code;
- (iv) A bond or certification of the issuance of a bond as provided in section 4509.59 of the Revised Code;



(v) A certificate of deposit of money or securities as provided in section 4509.62 of the Revised Code;

(vi) A certificate of self-insurance as provided in section 4509.72 of the Revised Code.

(b) A person also may present proof of financial responsibility under this section to the traffic violations bureau, court, registrar, or peace officer through use of an electronic wireless communications device as specified under section 4509.103 of the Revised Code.

(2) If a person fails to demonstrate proof of financial responsibility in a manner described in division (G)(1) of this section, the person may demonstrate proof of financial responsibility under this section by any other method that the court or the bureau, by reason of circumstances in a particular case, may consider appropriate.

(3) A motor carrier certificated by the interstate commerce commission or by the public utilities commission may demonstrate proof of financial responsibility by providing a statement designating the motor carrier's operating authority and averring that the insurance coverage required by the certifying authority is in full force and effect.

(4)(a) A finding by the registrar or court that a person is covered by proof of financial responsibility in the form of an insurance policy or surety bond is not binding upon the named insurer or surety or any of its officers, employees, agents, or representatives and has no legal effect except for the purpose of administering this section.

(b) The preparation and delivery of a financial responsibility identification card or any other document authorized to be used as proof of financial responsibility and the generation and delivery of proof of financial responsibility to an electronic wireless communications device that is displayed on the device as text or images does not do any of the following:

(i) Create any liability or estoppel against an insurer or surety, or any of its officers, employees, agents, or representatives;

(ii) Constitute an admission of the existence of, or of any liability or coverage under, any policy or



bond;

(iii) Waive any defenses or counterclaims available to an insurer, surety, agent, employee, or representative in an action commenced by an insured or third-party claimant upon a cause of action alleged to have arisen under an insurance policy or surety bond or by reason of the preparation and delivery of a document for use as proof of financial responsibility or the generation and delivery of proof of financial responsibility to an electronic wireless communications device.

(c) Whenever it is determined by a final judgment in a judicial proceeding that an insurer or surety, which has been named on a document or displayed on an electronic wireless communications device accepted by a court or the registrar as proof of financial responsibility covering the operation of a motor vehicle at the time of an accident or offense, is not liable to pay a judgment for injuries or damages resulting from such operation, the registrar, notwithstanding any previous contrary finding, shall forthwith suspend the operating privileges and registration rights of the person against whom the judgment was rendered as provided in division (A)(2) of this section.

(H) In order for any document or display of text or images on an electronic wireless communications device described in division (G)(1) of this section to be used for the demonstration of proof of financial responsibility under this section, the document or words or images shall state the name of the insured or obligor, the name of the insurer or surety company, and the effective and expiration dates of the financial responsibility, and designate by explicit description or by appropriate reference all motor vehicles covered which may include a reference to fleet insurance coverage.

(I) For purposes of this section, "owner" does not include a licensed motor vehicle leasing dealer as defined in section 4517.01 of the Revised Code, but does include a motor vehicle renting dealer as defined in section 4549.65 of the Revised Code. Nothing in this section or in section 4509.51 of the Revised Code shall be construed to prohibit a motor vehicle renting dealer from entering into a contractual agreement with a person whereby the person renting the motor vehicle agrees to be solely responsible for maintaining proof of financial responsibility, in accordance with this section, with respect to the operation, maintenance, or use of the motor vehicle during the period of the motor vehicle's rental.

(J) The purpose of this section is to require the maintenance of proof of financial responsibility with



respect to the operation of motor vehicles on the highways of this state, so as to minimize those situations in which persons are not compensated for injuries and damages sustained in motor vehicle accidents. The general assembly finds that this section contains reasonable civil penalties and procedures for achieving this purpose.

(K) Nothing in this section shall be construed to be subject to section 4509.78 of the Revised Code.

(L)(1) The registrar may terminate any suspension imposed under this section and not require the owner to comply with divisions (A)(5)(a), (b), and (c) of this section if the registrar with or without a hearing determines that the owner of the vehicle has established by clear and convincing evidence that all of the following apply:

(a) The owner customarily maintains proof of financial responsibility.

(b) Proof of financial responsibility was not in effect for the vehicle on the date in question for one of the following reasons:

(i) The vehicle was inoperable.

(ii) The vehicle is operated only seasonally, and the date in question was outside the season of operation.

(iii) A person other than the vehicle owner or driver was at fault for the lapse of proof of financial responsibility through no fault of the owner or driver.

(iv) The lapse of proof of financial responsibility was caused by excusable neglect under circumstances that are not likely to recur and do not suggest a purpose to evade the requirements of this chapter.

(2) The registrar may grant an owner or driver relief for a reason specified in division (L)(1)(b)(i) or (ii) of this section whenever the owner or driver is randomly selected to verify the existence of proof of financial responsibility for such a vehicle. However, the registrar may grant an owner or driver relief for a reason specified in division (L)(1)(b)(iii) or (iv) of this section only if the owner or driver



has not previously been granted relief under division (L)(1)(b)(iii) or (iv) of this section.

(M) The registrar shall adopt rules in accordance with Chapter 119. of the Revised Code that are necessary to administer and enforce this section. The rules shall include procedures for the surrender of license plates upon failure to maintain proof of financial responsibility and provisions relating to reinstatement of registration rights, acceptable forms of proof of financial responsibility, the use of an electronic wireless communications device to present proof of financial responsibility, and verification of the existence of financial responsibility during the period of registration.

(N)(1) When a person utilizes an electronic wireless communications device to present proof of financial responsibility, only the evidence of financial responsibility displayed on the device shall be viewed by the registrar, peace officer, employee or official of the traffic violations bureau, or the court. No other content of the device shall be viewed for purposes of obtaining proof of financial responsibility.

(2) When a person provides an electronic wireless communications device to the registrar, a peace officer, an employee or official of a traffic violations bureau, or the court, the person assumes the risk of any resulting damage to the device unless the registrar, peace officer, employee, or official, or court personnel purposely, knowingly, or recklessly commits an action that results in damage to the device.

The Legislative Service Commission presents the text of this section as a composite of the section as amended by multiple acts of the General Assembly. This presentation recognizes the principle stated in R.C. 1.52(B) that amendments are to be harmonized if reasonably capable of simultaneous operation.