

Boating under the Influence(BUI)

If you have been stopped for boating under the influence, remember that there are many factors that can complicate the Field Sobriety Test utilized. The officer will evaluate your physical condition and behavior to determine whether you are under the influence. If you have spent a long day in the sun and on the water, chances are you may appear to the officer as being under the influence. Specifically, after a long day on the water, your eyes may be red and you may be experiencing lightheadedness from dehydration. These characteristics can all be mistaken for alcohol consumption.

327.35 Boating under the influence; penalties; "designated drivers".--

(1) A person is guilty of the offense of boating under the influence and is subject to punishment as provided in subsection (2) if the person is operating a vessel within this state and:

(a) The person is under the influence of alcoholic beverages, any chemical substance set forth in s. 877.111, or any substance controlled under chapter 893, when affected to the extent that the person's normal faculties are impaired;

(b) The person has a blood-alcohol level of 0.08 or more grams of alcohol per 100 milliliters of blood; or

(c) The person has a breath-alcohol level of 0.08 or more grams of alcohol per 210 liters of breath.

(2)(a) Except as provided in paragraph (b), subsection (3), or subsection (4), any person who is convicted of a violation of subsection (1) shall be punished:

1. By a fine of:

a. Not less than \$500 or more than \$1,000 for a first conviction.

b. Not less than \$1,000 or more than \$2,000 for a second conviction; and

2. By imprisonment for:

a. Not more than 6 months for a first conviction.

b. Not more than 9 months for a second conviction.

(b)1. Any person who is convicted of a third violation of this section for an offense that occurs within 10 years after a prior conviction for a violation of this section commits a felony of the third degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082, s. 775.083, or s. 775.084.

2. Any person who is convicted of a third violation of this section for an offense that occurs more than 10 years after the date of a prior conviction for a violation of this section shall be punished by a fine of not less than \$2,000 or more than \$5,000 and by imprisonment for not more than 12 months.

3. Any person who is convicted of a fourth or subsequent violation of this section, regardless of when any prior conviction for a violation of this section occurred, commits a felony of the third degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082, s. 775.083, or s. 775.084.

However, the fine imposed for such fourth or subsequent violation may not be less than \$2,000.

(3) Any person:

(a) Who is in violation of subsection (1);

(b) Who operates a vessel; and

(c) Who, by reason of such operation, causes or contributes to causing:

1. Damage to the property or person of another commits a misdemeanor of the first degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082 or s. 775.083.

2. Serious bodily injury to another, as defined in s. 327.353, commits a felony of the third degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082, s. 775.083, or s. 775.084.

3. The death of any human being commits BUI manslaughter, and commits:

a. A felony of the second degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082, s. 775.083, or s. 775.084.

b. A felony of the first degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082, s. 775.083, or s. 775.084, if:

(I) At the time of the accident, the person knew, or should have known, that the accident occurred; and

(II) The person failed to give information and render aid as required by s. 327.30.

This sub-subparagraph does not require that the person knew that the accident resulted in injury or death.

(4) Any person who is convicted of a violation of subsection (1) and who has a blood-alcohol level or breath-alcohol level of 0.15 or higher, or any person who is convicted of a violation of subsection (1) and who at the time of the offense was accompanied in the vessel by a person under the age of 18 years, shall be punished:

(a) By a fine of:

1. Not less than \$1,000 or more than \$2,000 for a first conviction.

2. Not less than \$2,000 or more than \$4,000 for a second conviction.

3. Not less than \$4,000 for a third or subsequent conviction.

(b) By imprisonment for:

1. Not more than 9 months for a first conviction.

2. Not more than 12 months for a second conviction.

For the purposes of this subsection, only the instant offense is required to be a violation of subsection (1) by a person who has a blood-alcohol level or breath-alcohol level of 0.15 or higher.

(5) In addition to any sentence or fine, the court shall place any offender convicted of violating this section on monthly reporting probation and shall require attendance at a substance abuse course specified by the court; and the agency conducting the course may refer the offender to an authorized service provider for substance abuse evaluation and treatment, in addition to any sentence or fine imposed under this section. The offender shall assume reasonable costs for such education, evaluation, and treatment, with completion of all such education, evaluation, and treatment being a condition of reporting probation. Treatment resulting from a psychosocial evaluation may not be waived without a supporting psychosocial evaluation conducted by an agency appointed by the court and with access to the original evaluation. The offender shall bear the cost of this procedure. The term "substance abuse" means the abuse of alcohol or any substance named or described in Schedules I-V of s. 893.03.

(6) With respect to any person convicted of a violation of subsection (1), regardless of any other penalty imposed:

(a) For the first conviction, the court shall place the defendant on probation for a period not to exceed 1 year and, as a condition of such probation, shall order the defendant to participate in public service or a community work project for a minimum of 50 hours. The court must also, as a condition of probation, order the impoundment or immobilization of the vessel that was operated by or in the actual control of the defendant or any one vehicle registered in the defendant's name at the time of impoundment or immobilization, for a period of 10 days or for the unexpired term of any lease or rental agreement that expires within 10 days. The impoundment or immobilization must not occur concurrently with the incarceration of the defendant. The impoundment or immobilization order may be dismissed in accordance with paragraph (e) or paragraph (f). The total period of probation and incarceration may not exceed 1 year.

(b) For the second conviction for an offense that occurs within a period of 5 years after the date of a prior conviction for violation of this section, the court shall order imprisonment for not less than 10 days. The court must also, as a condition of probation, order the impoundment or immobilization of the vessel that was operated by or in the actual control of the defendant or any one vehicle registered in the defendant's name at the time of impoundment or immobilization, for a period of 30 days or for the unexpired term of any lease or rental agreement that expires within 30 days. The impoundment or immobilization must not occur concurrently with the incarceration of the defendant. The impoundment or immobilization order may be dismissed in accordance with paragraph (e) or paragraph (f). At least 48 hours of confinement must be consecutive.

(c) For the third or subsequent conviction for an offense that occurs within a period of 10 years after the date of a prior conviction for violation of this section, the court shall order imprisonment for not less than 30 days. The court must also, as a condition of probation, order the impoundment or immobilization of the vessel that was operated by or in the actual control of the defendant or any one vehicle registered in the defendant's name at the time of impoundment or immobilization, for a period of 90 days or for the unexpired term of any lease or rental agreement that expires within 90 days. The impoundment or immobilization must not occur concurrently with the incarceration of the defendant. The impoundment or immobilization order may be dismissed in accordance with paragraph (e) or paragraph (f). At least 48 hours of confinement must be consecutive.

(d) The court must at the time of sentencing the defendant issue an order for the impoundment or immobilization of a vessel. Within 7 business days after the date that the court issues the order of impoundment, and once again 30 business days before the actual impoundment or immobilization of the vessel, the clerk of the court must send notice by certified mail, return receipt requested, to the registered owner of each vessel, if the registered owner is a person other than the defendant, and to each person of record claiming a lien against the vessel.

(e) A person who owns but was not operating the vessel when the offense occurred may submit to the court a police report indicating that the vessel was stolen at the time of the offense or documentation of having purchased the vessel after the offense was committed from an entity other than the defendant or the defendant's agent. If the court finds that the vessel was stolen or that the sale was not made to circumvent the order and allow the defendant continued access to the vessel, the order must be dismissed and the owner of the vessel will incur no costs. If the court denies the request to dismiss the order of impoundment or immobilization, the petitioner may request an evidentiary hearing.

(f) A person who owns but was not operating the vessel when the offense occurred, and whose vessel was stolen or who purchased the vessel after the offense was committed directly from the defendant or the defendant's agent, may request an evidentiary hearing to determine whether the impoundment or immobilization should occur. If the court finds that either the vessel was stolen or the purchase was made without knowledge of the offense, that the purchaser had no relationship to the defendant other than through the transaction, and that such purchase would not circumvent the order and allow the defendant continued access to the vessel, the order must be dismissed and the owner of the vessel will incur no costs.

(g) All costs and fees for the impoundment or immobilization, including the cost of notification, must be paid by the owner of the vessel or, if the vessel is leased or rented, by the person leasing or renting the vessel, unless the impoundment or immobilization order is dismissed.

(h) The person who owns a vessel that is impounded or immobilized under this paragraph, or a person who has a lien of record against such a vessel and who has not requested a review of the impoundment pursuant to paragraph (e) or paragraph (f), may, within 10 days after the date that person has knowledge of the location of the vessel, file a complaint in the county in which the owner resides to determine whether the vessel was wrongfully taken or withheld from the owner or lienholder. Upon the filing of a complaint, the owner or lienholder may have the vessel released by posting with the court a bond or other adequate security equal to the amount of the costs and fees for impoundment or immobilization, including towing or storage, to ensure the payment of the costs and fees if the owner or lienholder does not prevail. When the bond is posted and the fee is paid as set forth in s. 28.24, the clerk of the court shall issue a certificate releasing the vessel. At the time of release, after reasonable inspection, the owner or lienholder must give a receipt to the towing or storage company indicating any loss or damage to the vessel or to the contents of the vessel.

(i) A defendant, in the court's discretion, may be required to serve all or any portion of a term of imprisonment to which the defendant has been sentenced pursuant to this section in a residential alcoholism treatment program or a residential drug abuse treatment program. Any time spent in such a program must be credited by the court toward the term of imprisonment.

For the purposes of this section, any conviction for a violation of s. 316.193, a previous conviction for the violation of former s. 316.1931, former s. 860.01, or former s. 316.028, or a previous conviction outside this state for driving under the influence, driving while intoxicated, driving with

an unlawful blood-alcohol level, driving with an unlawful breath-alcohol level, or any other similar alcohol-related or drug-related traffic offense, is also considered a previous conviction for violation of this section.

(7) A conviction under this section does not bar any civil suit for damages against the person so convicted.

(8) A person who is arrested for a violation of this section may not be released from custody:

(a) Until the person is no longer under the influence of alcoholic beverages, any chemical substance set forth in s. 877.111, or any substance controlled under chapter 893 and affected to the extent that his or her normal faculties are impaired;

(b) Until the person's blood-alcohol level or breath-alcohol level is less than 0.05; or

(c) Until 8 hours have elapsed from the time the person was arrested.

(9) Notwithstanding any other provision of this section, for any person convicted of a violation of subsection (1), in addition to the fines set forth in subsections (2) and (4), an additional fine of \$60 shall be assessed and collected in the same manner as the fines set forth in subsections (2) and (4). All fines collected under this subsection shall be remitted by the clerk of the court to the Department of Revenue for deposit into the Brain and Spinal Cord Injury Rehabilitation Trust Fund and used for the purposes set forth in s. 381.79, after 5 percent is deducted therefrom by the clerk of the court for administrative costs.

(10) It is the intent of the Legislature to encourage boaters to have a "designated driver" who does not consume alcoholic beverages.

History.--s. 2, ch. 59-400; s. 5, ch. 63-105; s. 1, ch. 65-361; s. 1, ch. 71-81; s. 22, ch. 73-331; s. 5, ch. 83-187; s. 7, ch. 84-188; s. 7, ch. 91-255; s. 8, ch. 93-124; s. 456, ch. 95-148; s. 19, ch. 96-330; s. 98, ch. 97-264; s. 49, ch. 97-271; s. 10, ch. 98-308; s. 14, ch. 98-324; s. 47, ch. 2000-152; s. 11, ch. 2000-320; s. 28, ch. 2001-122; s. 4, ch. 2002-78; s. 6, ch. 2002-263; s. 35, ch. 2008-111; s. 7, ch. 2009-86.

Note.--Former s. 371.51.