

A Maryland Judiciary Production
My Laws, My Courts, My Maryland
Traffic Citations

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Title: **TRAFFIC CITATIONS**

Hello and welcome. Getting a traffic citation is stressful, but I'm here to help. A couple of things to keep in mind. Traffic Citations are commonly known as traffic tickets or moving violations. They are given by police officers during traffic stops.

Now that you have a citation, let's talk about what to do next. In this video, we will discuss must appear citations v. pre-payable citations, your options for pre-payable citations, including pre-paying the fine, waiver hearings, and trials.

Please be aware that you have 30 days from the date of your citation to pre-pay or request a hearing. If you do not do so, your driver's license may be suspended.

This is a lot to cover, so Let's get started.

MUST APPEAR CITATIONS V. PRE-PAYABLE CITATIONS

This video is about traffic citations which give you the option to pre-pay the fine or request a hearing.

Look at your citation to see if it says “pre-payable” or “must appear when required by the court.”

If any of your citations say you must appear, this video may not be for you. “Must appear” tickets require that you appear at trial. In these cases, if you are convicted, there is a possibility you could be sentenced to time in jail. Consider hiring a lawyer or applying with a court commissioner to qualify for representation by the Office of the Public Defender.

Now let’s discuss your options for pre-payable citations

YOUR OPTIONS FOR PRE-PAYABLE CITATIONS

You must take one of the following three actions within 30 days of receiving a pre-payable citation.

Either plead guilty and pre-pay the fine, request a waiver hearing, or request a trial. Let’s explore each of those options starting with pleading guilty and paying the fine.

PRE-PAYING THE FINE

If you choose to plead guilty and pay the fine, you are admitting to the violation. There are five ways to pay:

- First, pay online at mdcourts.gov/traffic

- Second, pay by credit card on the phone at (800) 492-2656
- Third pay by mail. Send a check or money order to: District Court Traffic Processing Center, P.O. Box 6676, Annapolis, MD 21401; make sure you write the citation number on the payment.
- Fourth, you may pay in person at most District Courts;
- And finally, you may pay at a kiosk at the Motor Vehicle Administration.

For fines that are \$150 or more, you may also request a payment plan. Instructions for how to apply for a payment plan will appear on your citation. If you pay the fine or request a payment plan, you will not need to appear for a hearing.

WAIVER HEARINGS

Your next option is to request a waiver hearing. This is sometimes called pleading guilty with an explanation. Choose this option if you admit to the violation but wish to explain your situation to a judge. The officer who wrote the citation will not be present at the hearing. The judge will listen to your explanation. They may waive or lower the fine. They also may offer you probation instead of a conviction. There is also the possibility that your fine could be increased, up to a maximum of \$500 plus court costs.

TRIALS

Your final option is to ask for a trial. If you choose this option, the officer who issued your ticket will be summoned by the court to appear and testify. You will have an opportunity to cross examine the officer and to present your side of the case. You may have witnesses testify or present other evidence. You are responsible for letting your witnesses know the date, time, and location of your trial. You may choose to have a lawyer represent you but are not required to hire one. After hearing all the evidence, the judge will decide whether you are guilty or not guilty. If the court finds you guilty, you have the right to an appeal within 30 days of your trial date, unless you are offered a probation before judgment also known as a PBJ. There are non-refundable court costs for filing an appeal. When found guilty, you may pay the fine plus court costs. Payment plans may be requested for fines exceeding \$150.

You may request either a waiver hearing or a trial by checking the corresponding box on your citation.

Sign and date the citation, then mail it to the court. The Court will send you your hearing or trial date in the mail. If you don't appear for your court date, your driver's license can be suspended.

One last thing, if you change your mind and decide you don't want to go to court, you can pay the fine at any time up until your court date. As long as the court has received your payment before the day of your trial, you do not need to appear, and the case is closed.

Let's review ▾

LET'S REVIEW

In this video I covered traffic citations that give you the option to pre-pay the fine. This means you can pay the fine to avoid going to court. You also have the option to request a waiver hearing. At these hearings, you can provide an explanation and ask the judge to waive or reduce the fine. You may also request a trial where a Judge will consider evidence regarding whether you committed the traffic violation. More information about traffic cases is available at mdcourts.gov/legalhelp/traffic. Finally, if any of your traffic citations say you must appear in court, the information in this video does not apply to you. Seek advice from a lawyer right away.

I hope this information has been helpful. Thanks for watching.