

NORTH CAROLINA

Licensing Drivers Protects Public Safety

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THE AMERICAN AUTOMOBILE ASSOCIATION (AAA) has published findings that illustrate the public safety benefits of expanding access to driver's licenses in North Carolina. According to AAA:

- One in seven drivers in North Carolina is unlicensed.¹
- 21 percent of fatal accidents in North Carolina involve an unlicensed driver.²
- 18.2 percent of fatal accidents nationwide involved a driver who was unlicensed or invalidly licensed.³
- An estimated 51.2 percent of all drivers in the U.S. who left the scene of a fatal crash lacked a valid license.⁴
- North Carolina is trending upward in percentage of unlicensed drivers involved in fatal crashes.⁵

A North Carolina Highway Patrol officer with 20 years' experience declared that the problem of unlicensed drivers "is one of the biggest problems on traffic stops and at accidents."⁶

Drivers who lack licenses are also likely to lack auto insurance, and driving while uninsured creates additional problems. The Insurance Research Council found that North Carolina's rate of uninsured drivers in 2009 was 13.5 percent.⁷ An article published on the website of a Winston-Salem, North Carolina-based law firm, says this:

The cost of unlicensed drivers is immense. An unlicensed driver is an uninsured driver, so when he or she gets in an accident the other party or the other party's insurer usually foots the bill. Unfortunately, the cost is passed along to everyone else through increased premiums.⁸

¹ Jonathan Carlson, "Unlicensed Drivers Putting the Public at Risk," *WNCN*, Feb. 27, 2013, www.wncn.com/story/21389839/unlicensed-drivers-putting-the-public-at-risk.

² *Id.*

³ *Unlicensed to Kill* (AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, Nov. 2011), www.aaafoundation.org/sites/default/files/2011Unlicensed2Kill.pdf, pp. 2.

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ *Id.*, p. 11.

⁶ "Unlicensed Drivers Putting the Public at Risk," *supra* note 1.

⁷ Charles Nguyen, "Do Stricter Uninsured Penalties Mean Lower Rates of Uninsured Drivers?," Online Auto Insurance website, Sept. 12, 2012, <http://articles.onlineautoinsurance.com/coverage/uninsured-rates-vs-penalties/>.

⁸ "Driving Without a License Is No Joke in North Carolina," website of Wood, Rabel & Peake, LLP, www.wrplaw.net/Articles/Driving-without-a-license-is-no-joke-in-North-Carolina.shtml.

LOS ANGELES (Headquarters)
3435 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 2850
Los Angeles, CA 90010
213 639-3900
213 639-3911 fax



WASHINGTON, DC
1121 14th Street, NW, Suite 200
Washington, DC 20005
202 216-0261
202 216-0266 fax