

April 1 end of grace period for liability law

Several motorists have already fallen under a crunch of arrests by law enforcement officials adhering to the state's new liability insurance law. But the chances of getting a citation will be even greater after April 1.

Most law enforcement agencies began enforcing the law when it went into effect Jan. 1, but they have given an extra 90 days to people who are either uninsured or unable to prove they are insured.

"We are still under a 90-day grace period," a Department of Public Safety spokeswoman said. "But that will end April 1."

After April 1, motorists stopped by the DPS for any traffic violation will be cited if they fail to show proof of accident liability coverage.

In Houston, acting Police Chief John Bales recommended that officers issue instructions on how to comply with the law rather than issue tickets.

However, officials said the police department averages about 35 tickets a day for failure to show proof of coverage. They said many of those citations were issued at accident sites.

"(Bales) told the (police) we had had a lot of calls from citizens and insurance companies saying there was no way they would have their proof of insurance coverage by the time the law went into effect," Houston police spokesman Larry Trout said.

"The bottom line is yes, you can get a ticket in, but in all probability the officer, instead of issuing a ticket, will give information on how to comply. The officers have printed information on how to comply."

Law enforcement officers have not been so lenient in Dallas, where more than 2,000 citations have been issued since Jan. 1.

"Actually, we'd like to see the law strengthened," Deputy Chief Harold Warren, said. "We would love for there to be a requirement that automobile insurance become a necessary part of vehicle registration."

Warren recently told a legislative panel the tickets were issued after police stopped motorists for other traffic offenses, and more would have been issued if police had been allowed to set up checkpoints.

Records clerk Art Long, of the San Antonio Municipal Court, said about 1,600 citations have been issued in the Alamo city since Jan. 1.

"We do not just arbitrarily stop anybody to check if they have liability insurance," San Antonio police Sgt. Gerald Marple, said. "If we stop a person for a traffic violation, we also check to see if they have liability insurance. I would imagine that about 20 to 25 percent do not have it."

El Paso assistant City Attorney Eddie Miranda said police have enforced the new law since it went into effect.

"We are not giving a grace period here," he said. "Officers are checking drivers who are stopped for other violations. We have not set up any checkpoints, but we probably will in the future."

However, Miranda said motorists stopped by the El Paso County sheriff's deputies have not been ticketed because the sheriff's department granted a grace period that will end March 30.



staff photo by Eric M...

Need an extra hand?

Carla Osterholme looks to her brother, Peter, for some help with her boots after both went wading in the fountain across from the Chemistry Building. Carla and

Peter's father, Lance Osterholme, and his two children were just travelling through Texas from Oregon and decided to stop and visit the University.

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Questions raised in inmate's death; testimony contradictory

United Press International
HUNTSVILLE—An investigation into the death of an epileptic prisoner who another

inmate testified was beaten until he suffered seizures has turned up inconsistencies in procedures by Texas Department of Correction and local officials, a Dallas newspaper has reported.

The Dallas Times Herald cited documents Sunday indicating inmate Harold Raymond Bunt Jr., died at the Wynne Unit of Huntsville prison July 13, 1970 of convulsive generalized epilepsy.

But in testimony at the Galveston murder trial of Eroy Brown, accused of killing former Ellis Unit Warden Wallace Pack and prison farm manager Billy Max Moore, a former inmate said he saw inmate guards beat Bunt with a blackjack — a lead-weighted, leather-covered hand weapon — put him in a straitjacket and hang him from his cell bars.

Al Slaton, 49, a former inmate and friend of Bunt, testi-

fied a week ago in the Brown murder trial. He gave details about Bunt's death and said Pack, then a prison officer, withheld Bunt's medication.

Bunt, who was being held on a theft charge, died later during an epileptic seizure.

Corrections Department spokesman Richard Hartley called the testimony ludicrous and dismissed it, the newspaper reported.

Hartley said prison records indicated Bunt died after suffering epileptic seizures and falling out of his prison bunk.

The newspaper reported former Huntsville Justice of the Peace Mabel Franklow did not conduct an investigation into the case, refused to order an autopsy and held no inquest.

It also reported prison officials told Bunt's family he died in a hospital, but two former inmates who say they witnessed

the beating contend prison officials removed Bunt from his cell.

Bunt's mother, Sarah of Gilmer, said she is what to believe.

"I've been told by two people who were in prison at the time, that Harold died a natural death, that she believe it. I couldn't bring believe it. But now know."

Bunt said her son suffering from epileptic seizures after a ninth-grade football injury in 1962.

"As long as he was (epilepsy) medication, OK," she said, but she that he didn't always take it.

Slaton said Pack ordered inmates to "beat the hell out of him (Bunt)."

"They whipped him pretty bad with the Slaton said in testimony kicked him a few times stomach. They were and beating and kicking stomping him. His blood ceiling."

Slaton said the inmate wrapped in the straitjacket hanged him from the cell.

"When he was up in jacket, he started seizures, one after the Slaton said. "In a matter minutes after he started the seizures he was dead on a narcotics conviction the inmates who beat him dead, so they could tell the story."

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