Verified Nov 2026

WASHINGTON TRAFFIC LAWS: THE VISUAL STUDY GUIDE

Everything you need to pass the DOL Test.
Plain language. No jargon.

WASHINGTON'S SHARP EDGES

Traffic laws make thousands of strangers predictable. Washington enforces three uniquely strict philosophies:

JUDGMENT OVER SIGNS



The **Basic Rule** of reasonable speed **outranks every posted limit**.

ZERO TOLERANCE DEVICES



E-DUI laws ban even the act of **holding a phone**, with **zero exceptions** for red lights.

VULNERABLE PROTECTION



Uniquely strict **spatial zones for schools** and **child-restraint ages** that **run all the way to 16**.

Speed Part I: The Basic Rule Umbrella

The Basic Rule outranks the sign. You may never drive faster than is reasonable and prudent for current conditions and hazards. Speed must be controlled to avoid collisions.

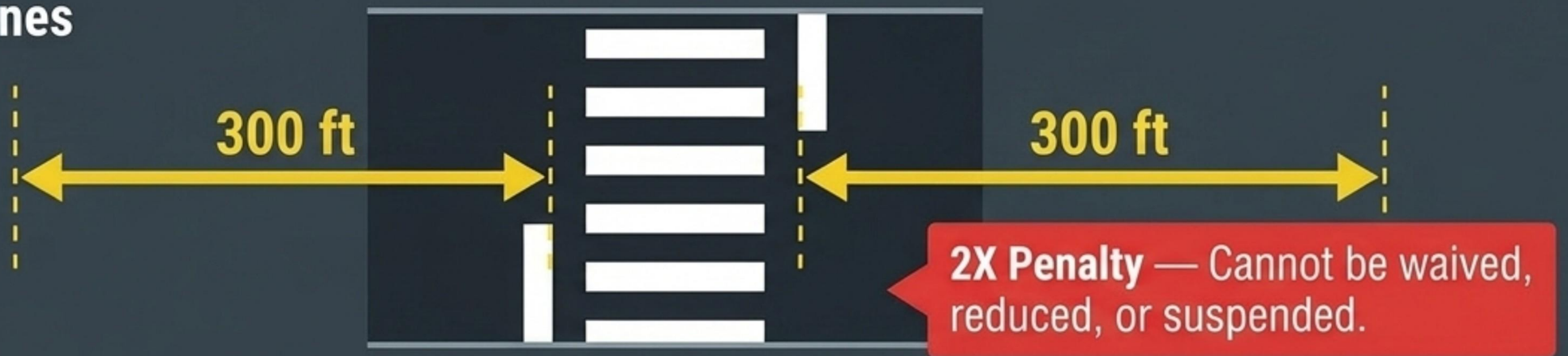


Statutory maximums when no hazards exist

Speed Part II: High-Stakes Zones

School Zones

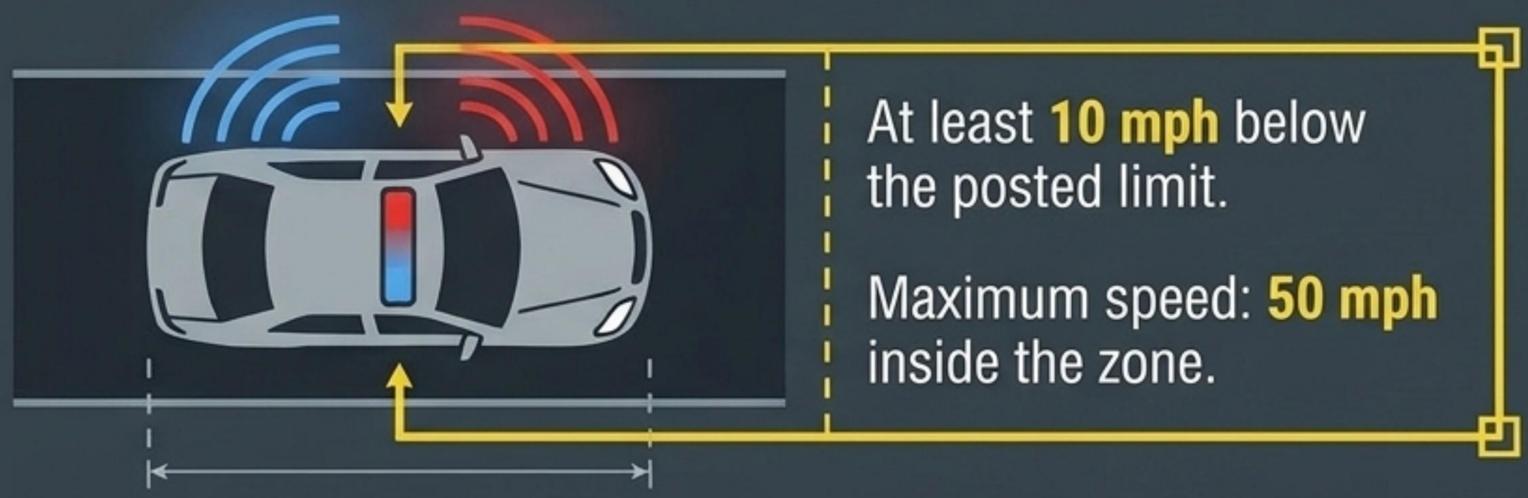
20 mph



2X Penalty — Cannot be waived, reduced, or suspended.

Emergency Zones

Move over or slow down.



At least **10 mph** below the posted limit.

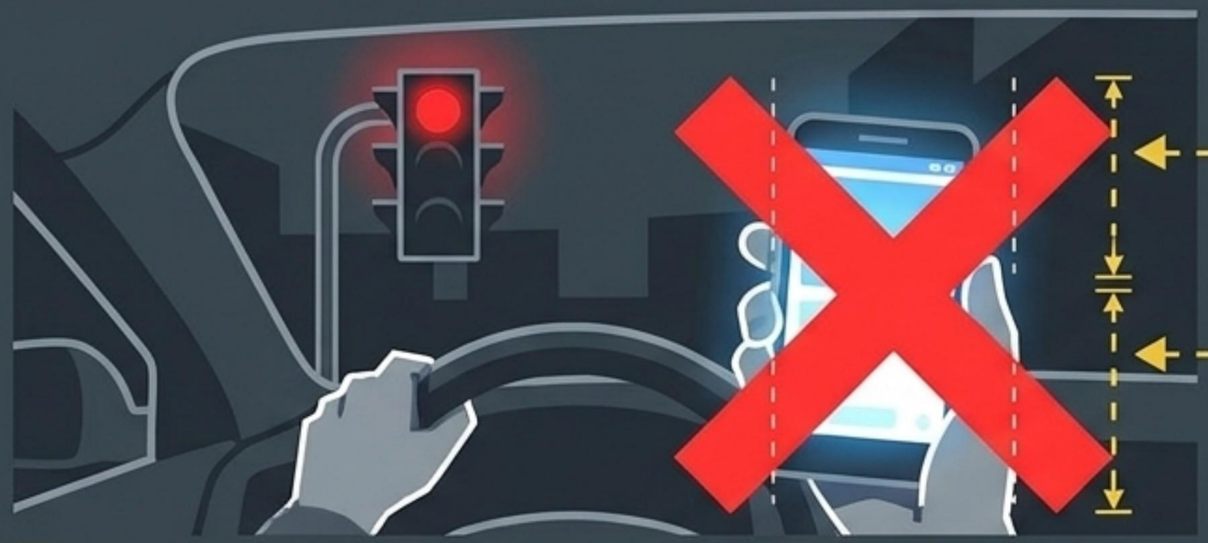
Maximum speed: **50 mph** inside the zone.

The Two Tiers of Distracted Driving

	E-DUI (Serious Tier)	Dangerously Distracted (Lesser Tier)
Definition	Holding the device in either/both hands (even without typing). Watching video.	Any non-driving activity that interferes with safe operation (eating, grooming, etc.).
Enforcement	Primary offense.	Secondary action only (must be pulled over for something else first).
Penalty	Statutory penalty. **Doubled** for repeat offenses or in crash prevention zones. **Cannot be waived**.	Flat **$30 base penalty**.

E-DUI: The Stationary Trap

Driving includes being temporarily stationary.



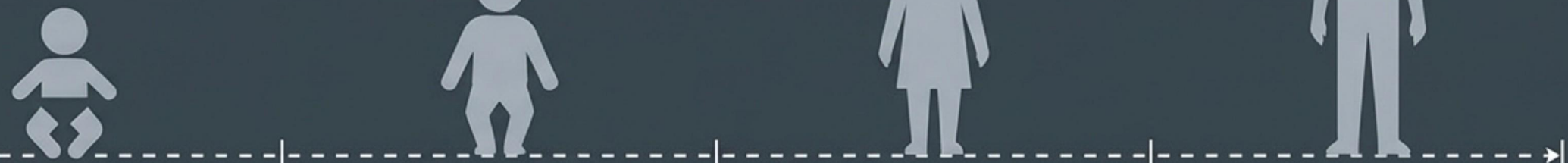
Holding at a red light = **E-DUI.**

Holding in stopped traffic = **E-DUI.**

Exceptions Box

- **General Drivers:** Minimal finger use (a single tap) to activate/deactivate a function is allowed. Hands-free is permitted.
- **Permit/Intermediate Drivers:** ZERO device use allowed, not even hands-free.

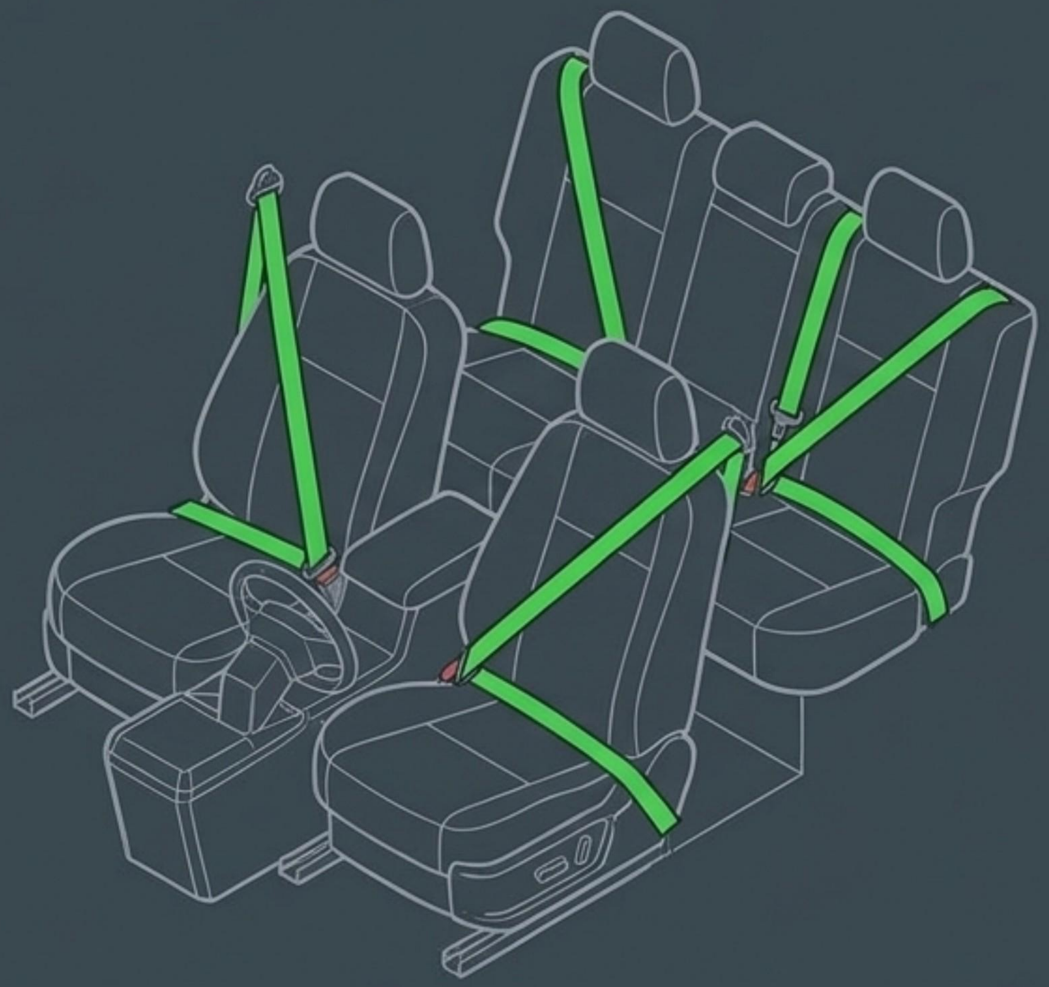
Child Restraints by the Numbers



Under Age 2	Under Age 4	Under 4’9 tall	Under Age 13
Rear-facing (to manufacturer’s limit).	Forward-facing with a harness.	Booster seat (until the standard belt fits properly).	Must ride in the back seat where practical.

First violation? It can be dismissed if you provide proof of acquiring an approved system within 7 days.

Seatbelts & Passenger Liability



The Magic Number

Age 16

- **Age 16+:** Every person operating or riding must wear a properly adjusted belt.
- **Under 16 Liability:** The driver is strictly responsible for anyone under 16 being properly belted or restrained.

Legal Nuance Box

Belt violations are recorded on your abstract, **BUT**:

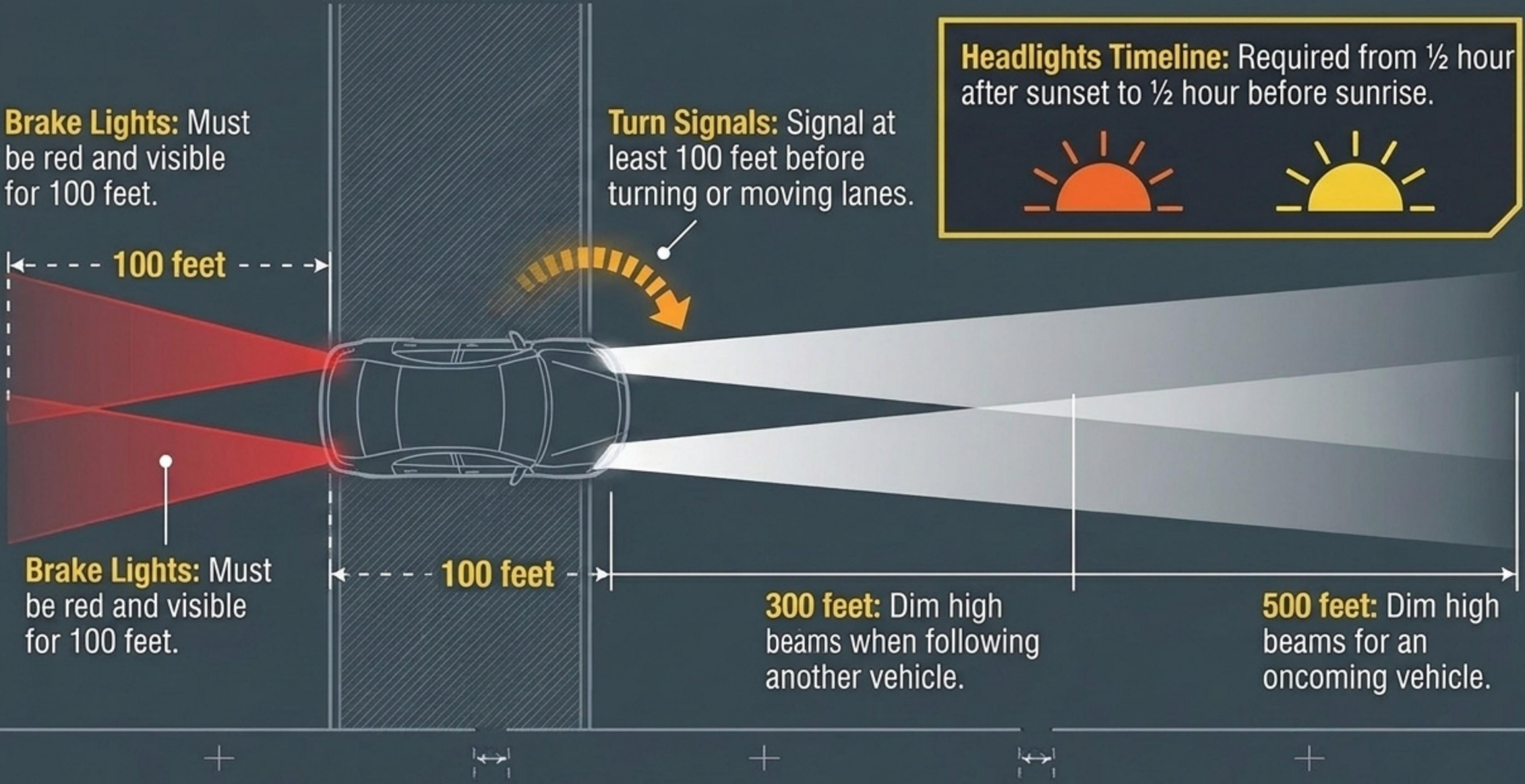
- They are not available to insurance companies or employers.
- They are not admissible as evidence of negligence in civil cases.

Visibility: Signals & Lights

Brake Lights: Must be red and visible for 100 feet.

Turn Signals: Signal at least 100 feet before turning or moving lanes.

Headlights Timeline: Required from ½ hour after sunset to ½ hour before sunrise.

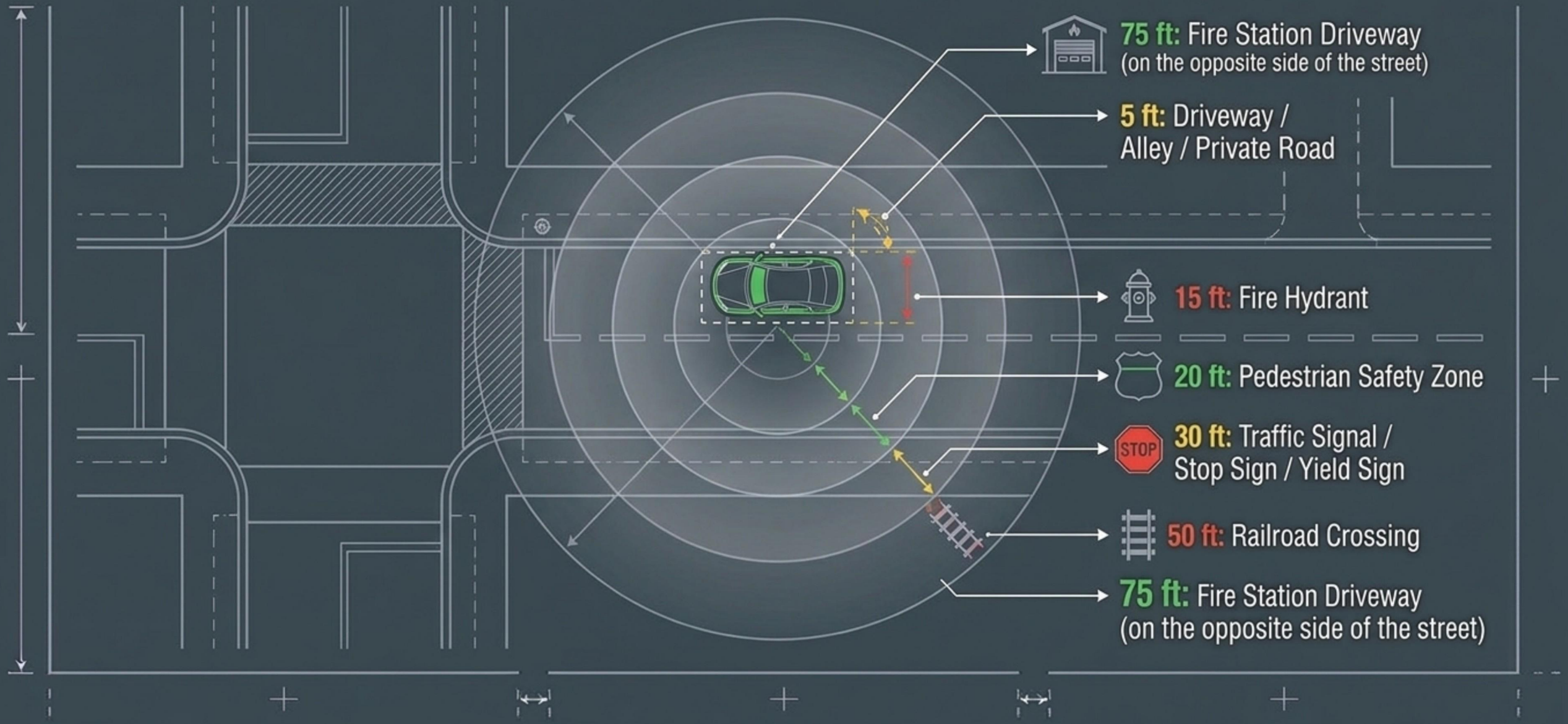


Brake Lights: Must be red and visible for 100 feet.

300 feet: Dim high beams when following another vehicle.

500 feet: Dim high beams for an oncoming vehicle.

The Parking Distance Ruler



Mandates: Parking & U-Turns



The Curb Rule

Park no more than **12 inches** from the curb. **Never face oncoming traffic**. **Never double-park**.



U-Turns

Generally allowed unless signed. **Never allowed on a curve** or **approaching the crest of a hill**.



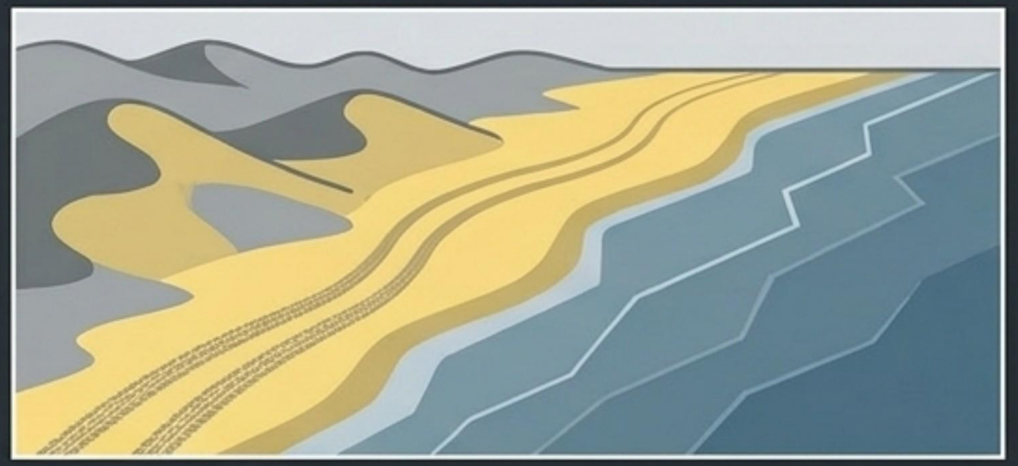
Unattended Vehicles

It is a crime to leave:

- A child under 16 **unattended with the motor running**.
- A child under 12 **unattended at all**.
- An animal in **conditions that could harm it**.

Washington Oddities: Beaches & Tickets

Beach Driving

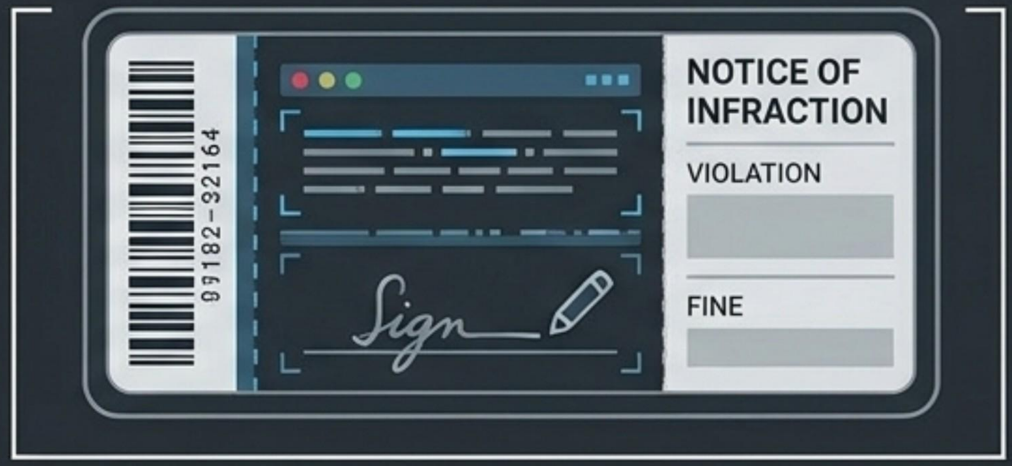


Allowed only in Grays Harbor and Pacific Counties.

Maximum speed: **25 mph**.

Rule: **Pedestrians** and bicycles **hold the right-of-way** at all times.

Answering Tickets



Deadline: **15 days** to answer following instructions on the back.

Rule: Signing a ticket is not an admission of guilt (but refusing to sign can result in arrest).

The Ultimate Numbers Cheat Sheet

Screenshot this.

SPEEDS

20 - School Zones

25 - City/Town/Beach

50 - County/Max Emergency

60 - State Highways

DISTANCES

5 ft - Driveway

12 in - Curb

15 ft - Hydrant

30 ft - Signal/Stop Sign

50 ft - Railroad

75 ft - Fire Station (opposite)

100 ft - Signal/Brake light

300 ft - School zone buffer

500 ft - Dim for oncoming

AGES & HEIGHTS

Age 2 - Rear-face

Age 4 - Forward-harness

4’9 - Booster Seat

Age 12 - Unattended crime

Age 13 - Back seat requirement

Age 16 - Adult belt / Driver liability

Test Your Knowledge

Scenario: 50 mph county road, heavy fog, deer near the trees. What is the legal speed?

Answer: The Basic Rule dictates a speed less than 50 mph, reasonable and prudent for the fog hazard conditions.

Scenario: Holding a phone at a red light. Is 'the car was stopped' a valid legal defense?

Answer: No. E-DUI applies to temporarily stationary traffic.

Scenario: Parking 25 ft from a stop sign, 18 inches from the curb. What are the violations?

Answer: Both. Must be at least 30 ft from the stop sign, and no more than 12 inches from the curb.

Keep Practicing.

Full WA Practice Test

Traffic Law Flashcards

Signs & Signals Study Guide

Right of Way Study Guide

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Keep practicing — free, no sign-up

Washington Traffic Laws study guide, practice tests & flashcards:

drivinglicensetest.org/wa

Sources verified November 12, 2026