

Honking Out of Frustration – Illegal Road Rage

US Peace Keepers

As peaceful drivers, we commit to protecting ourselves and others from intolerable and overly dramatic acts of road rage, as well as from the dangers posed by driving under the influence. Both road rage and impaired driving place pedestrians, passengers, and fellow drivers at serious risk. We believe in being proactive about public safety and mutual trust, and we believe in respecting the law.

I cannot recall a single moment when driving required road rage. Road awareness or road remedy, perhaps. A measured reaction, within reason, sure. But never road rage. Road rage is most often a symptom of untamed aggression and constitutes interpersonal violence. There is no excuse for it.

1. General Legal Rule (Nationwide Pattern)

Across nearly every state that has a vehicle code, honking a horn **only to warn of danger or ensure safe operation is permitted**, and **any other use (including honking in frustration) is prohibited**. Multiple states explicitly say:

“The driver shall not otherwise use the horn except when reasonably necessary to insure safe operation.” ([FindLaw Codes](#))

This pattern is so widespread that one article on horn honking notes **41 states** have such laws limiting horn use. ([CBS News](#))

2. State Examples (Statutes + Penalty Notes)

Below are *actual statute citations* for several states and what they say:

California

- **Statute:** *California Vehicle Code § 27001* — Only use horn when reasonably necessary for safe operation; otherwise prohibited (except certain theft alarms). ([FindLaw Codes](#))

- **Penalty Info:** While the statute itself doesn't list a specific dollar fine in §27001, **violations are commonly prosecuted as a traffic citation (disturbing the peace or improper use of signal device)**. In practice, fines can be similar to non-moving violations (often in the **~\$250 – \$400 range** plus fees) and may add points. Case law shows courts uphold limiting horn use. ([Ticket Snipers®](#))

Florida

- **Statute:** *Fla. Stat. § 316.271* — Horn must be in good working order; driver *must only use it when reasonably necessary*; no unreasonably loud sound. ([Florida Legislature](#))
- **Penalty Info:** Florida vehicle code doesn't list a specific fine in §316.271, but improper horn use can be cited as a **non-moving violation** under general equipment violation penalties (commonly **\$30 – \$100+ fees**) depending on county enforcement.

Oklahoma

- **Statute:** *Okl. Stat. § 47-12-401* — Horn use only when reasonably necessary; prohibits use otherwise, and prohibits use on bicycles, animals, etc. ([Justia Law](#))
- **Penalty Info:** Horn violations typically fall under **basic traffic fines** unless local ordinances add extra penalties — often **\$50 – \$150+** depending on the court.

South Carolina

- **Statute:** *S.C. Code § 56-5-4960* — Use horn only when reasonably necessary; otherwise not allowed. ([Justia Law](#))
- **Penalty Info:** Enforcement is typically as a **non-moving violation** with a fine (varies by municipality), often levied as a general minor traffic offense (~\$25 – \$150).

Indiana

- **Statute:** *Ind. Code § 9-19-5-2* — Driver must only use horn when reasonably necessary for safe operation. ([Justia Law](#))
- **Penalty Info:** Typically cited as a **non-moving violation** with fines set locally (often ~\$50 – \$100+), unless bundled with another moving violation.

Washington

- **Statute:** *RCW 46.37.380* — Horn audible requirement; use only when reasonably necessary; prohibits otherwise. ([Washington State Legislature](#))
- **Penalty Info:** Like other states, this is cited as a **non-moving equipment/traffic violation**; fines vary by city/county (frequently \$50 – \$150+).

Virginia

- **Statute:** *Va. Code § 46.2-1060* — Horn use only as reasonable warning; prohibits unnecessary or unreasonably loud sounds. ([Virginia Law](#))
- **Penalty Info:** Generally treated as a **non-moving violation**, standard traffic fine ranges (often ~\$25 – \$100+ fees).



3. Major City Local Laws (Example: NYC)

Some large cities have **much stricter honking laws** layered on top of state laws:

New York City

- NYC enforces a *strict “no honking” rule* unless there is **immediate danger** to safety (not just mild frustration). Violating the city rule can result in:
 - **Fines starting around \$350** or more.
 - **Points on your NY driver’s license** depending on how it’s charged. ([The Sun](#))

⚠ This is *local* law in NYC (and some other large cities may have their own honking/noise codes) *in addition* to New York State’s vehicle code.



4. How Penalties Typically Work

Nearly every state’s primary honking statute is phrased the same: *Horn use only when reasonably necessary for safety*. But:

Penalties are rarely in the statute itself — instead, violation is often charged under:

- A non-moving violation category (equipment/obstruction violation).
- A noise ordinance (state or local).

- A disturbance of the peace charge in some jurisdictions.

Typical penalties (national pattern):

- **Fines:** often in the range of **\$25 – \$150** for a basic horn misuse citation, depending on jurisdiction.
- **Local ordinances:** In urban areas, fines *can be higher* (e.g., NYC ~\$350+). ([The Sun](#))
- **License points:** Usually *not* applied for basic horn misuse, but local city ordinances (like NYC's) may incorporate licensing penalties.

5. Summary Table (Statute + Typical Penalty)

State	Statute Citation	Horn-Use Rule	Typical Penalty
California	Veh. Code §27001	Only when necessary for safety (FindLaw Codes)	Traffic citation (often ~\$250-\$400+ & potential points) (Ticket Snipers®)
Florida	§316.271	Same minimum audible + safe use rule (Florida Legislature)	Non-moving violation (~\$30-\$100+)
Oklahoma	§47-12-401	Safe-use only (Justia Law)	Local fine (~\$50-\$150+)
South Carolina	§56-5-4960	Safe-use only (Justia Law)	Non-moving violation (~\$25-\$150+)
Indiana	§9-19-5-2	Safe-use only (Justia Law)	Non-moving violation
Washington	RCW46.37.380	Safe-use only (Washington State Legislature)	Non-moving violation
Virginia	§46.2-1060	Safe-use only/unnecessary loud prohibited (Virginia Law)	Non-moving violation
New York City (local)	NYC Noise/Horn Code	Only for immediate danger	Fine ~\$350+ & Possible points (The Sun)



6. Important Notes

- **State vs. Local:** A state *vehicle code* sets baseline rules; **cities/counties often have noise ordinances** (especially near schools/hospitals) that lay out additional penalties for unnecessary horn use.

- **Fines vary widely:** Because most state statutes *don't list specific fines*, enforcement depends on local traffic courts and municipality fee schedules.
- **First Amendment:** Courts have generally rejected claims that honking for expressive purposes (e.g., protest support) is protected if it violates horn-use laws. ([The Free Speech Center](#))
- **Noise ordinances:** Some places fine any loud horn use at night as a *noise disturbance* separate from state vehicle code.
