

Municipal Court Criminal Misdemeanor FAQ

What is a misdemeanor vs. a gross misdemeanor?

In general, gross misdemeanors are offenses punishable by up to 364 days in jail and misdemeanors are those offenses punishable by up to 90 days in jail. A fine may also be imposed. A fine for a gross misdemeanor may not exceed \$5,000 and \$1,000 for a misdemeanor.

What should a person accused of a crime (not a traffic infraction) expect to happen?

All persons accused of any crime that might result in a jail sentence have certain rights. The accused is advised of these rights at an arraignment, which is generally the first appearance in court on the citation or charge. It will be confirmed that the accused understands his/her constitutional rights as explained in the court session. The accused may hire private counsel to provide legal assistance. If the accused is financially unable to hire a private attorney and qualifies, a public defender may be appointed.

What hearings will I have to attend?

The first hearing you will attend is called an arraignment. At the arraignment, the Judge will advise you of your rights, tell you what charge(s) have been filed against you, and ask you to enter a plea of not guilty or guilty to each charge. As a general rule, another hearing requiring your presence will be scheduled after your arraignment.

How do I make sure I get notice of my hearing date?

The court has to be able to contact you to tell you about hearings scheduled on your case. Usually this is done by mail but sometimes you will be told in person. You **MUST** attend all hearings. If you move and do not notify the court of your new address, the court will not be able to send you notice of hearing dates. You can notify the court of your new address by calling 253-922-6635.

What do I do if I miss a Court date?

Showing up for court is mandatory. The Judge may issue a warrant for your arrest. If you have missed your hearing call the court at 253-922-6635 for further instructions.

What should I wear and how should I act in Court?

Suitable attire is required. Shoes and shirts are necessary. Hats are to be removed upon entering the courtroom. No smoking, food, or drink will be allowed. Children may be present in the courtroom, but if they disturb the proceedings you may be requested to remove them. The court does not provide child care. Upon your arrival, find your name on the calendar, then have a seat in the courtroom until the session convenes. You do not need to check with the clerk unless your name is **NOT** on the list. When your case is called, come forward.