

Motor Vehicle Offenses

Attorneys

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Overview

Skilled counsel. Swift action. Keeping you on the road.

A criminal motor vehicle charge is not a traffic citation. Charges like reckless driving, negligent operation, leaving the scene of an accident, and operating after suspension carry criminal penalties, license consequences, and RMV hearing exposure that most drivers do not anticipate when they decide to handle the matter without counsel. Cohen Cleary defends individuals facing motor vehicle charges across Massachusetts and Rhode Island, from negotiated resolutions on lesser offenses to hardship license applications and serious vehicular crime defense.

When a Traffic Stop Becomes a Criminal Matter

Most people treat a traffic citation as a minor inconvenience and pay the fine without a second thought. That instinct can be expensive. A single surchargeable event in Massachusetts can trigger thousands of dollars in insurance premium increases over six years, often far exceeding the cost of contesting the citation in the first place. And when a motor vehicle charge crosses into criminal territory, the consequences extend well beyond your insurance bill. Charges like reckless driving, hit and run, and operating on a suspended license are not resolved at the clerk's window. They are prosecuted in court, and a conviction can mean license loss, a permanent record, and incarceration. These are matters that require a traffic crime attorney, not a plan to simply pay the fine and move on. The difference between a manageable outcome and a life-altering one often depends on how quickly you secure counsel who understands both the criminal courts and the RMV hearing process.

How We Defend Motor Vehicle Charges

Criminal motor vehicle offenses in Massachusetts carry consequences that civil traffic violations do not: potential jail time, a criminal record, and administrative license actions through the RMV that operate on a separate track from the court case. Each of these charges also triggers surchargeable events under the Massachusetts Safe Driver Insurance Plan, with premium increases that compound over a six-year assessment period. We handle the full spectrum of motor vehicle criminal defense, including:

- **Reckless driving and negligent operation charges** under M.G.L. c. 90, Section 24, where the prosecution must prove conduct that goes beyond ordinary negligence
- **Leaving the scene of an accident**, including cases involving property damage and personal injury, where the statutory duty to stop and provide information creates exposure to both criminal penalties and civil license suspension
- **Operating after suspension or revocation**, a charge that often surprises drivers who were unaware their license status had changed due to unpaid fines, out-of-state violations, or insurance lapses

- **Serious vehicular crimes**, including motor vehicle homicide and OUI manslaughter, where the stakes require meticulous investigation and aggressive defense preparation from the outset
- **RMV hearings and hardship license applications**, which proceed on a separate administrative timeline and require distinct preparation from the criminal case itself

Why Clients Choose Cohen Cleary

At Cohen Cleary, our practice teams combine deep subject-matter experience with disciplined execution and responsive client service. We do not take a one-size-fits-all approach. Every matter is handled with careful preparation, clear communication, and a strategy tailored to the client's goals and the realities of the forum.

Clients choose Cohen Cleary because we deliver:

Practice-Focused Legal Experience

Our attorneys work in defined practice areas, allowing us to develop practical insight into the legal, procedural, and regulatory nuances that matter most in each case. This focus allows us to anticipate issues, avoid unnecessary delays, and position matters for efficient resolution.

Clear Guidance and Proactive Communication

We prioritize clarity at every stage. Clients receive straightforward explanations of their options, timely updates on developments, and practical advice grounded in real-world outcomes.

Strategic Advocacy with Trial Readiness

Whether a matter calls for negotiation, mediation, or litigation, our attorneys prepare every case with discipline and foresight. We pursue efficient resolution when possible and are fully prepared to advocate aggressively when necessary to protect our clients' interests.

Regional Knowledge and Local Presence

With offices throughout Massachusetts and experience across New England courts and agencies, we bring local insight and regional reach to every matter.

Client-Centered Service

We treat every matter with urgency and respect. Our clients rely on us for responsive service, sound judgment, and steady counsel through complex legal challenges.

In our criminal defense work, this approach helps clients navigate motor vehicle charges with clarity, efficiency, and confidence.

Defending Motor Vehicle Cases in Massachusetts Courts

Motor vehicle cases in Massachusetts District Courts move quickly, and the procedural overlap between the criminal case and the RMV administrative process creates traps for defendants who do not have counsel managing both tracks. We tell our clients that the court outcome and the RMV outcome are two separate fights, and winning one does not guarantee winning the other. A not-guilty finding in Taunton District Court, for example, does not automatically restore a license that was administratively suspended following a leaving-the-scene charge. The RMV hearing requires its own preparation, its own evidence, and its own advocacy. Our attorneys

handle both proceedings in coordination, building a defense strategy that accounts for the criminal penalties, the license consequences, and the long-term insurance surcharge impact that most defendants overlook until it is too late.

Serving Massachusetts and Rhode Island

Cohen Cleary defends motor vehicle criminal charges throughout Massachusetts and Rhode Island, with offices in [Taunton](#) and [Plymouth](#). Our attorneys regularly appear in district courts across southeastern Massachusetts, including Bristol County, Plymouth County, and Norfolk County. From Plymouth District Court to Taunton Trial Court, we bring procedural familiarity that matters in time-sensitive motor vehicle cases. We also represent clients in RMV Board of Appeal hearings for hardship license applications and license restoration, coordinating the administrative and criminal defense tracks from a single point of contact, with the capacity to serve clients across New England.

Protect Your License and Your Record With Guidance From Cohen Cleary

If you are facing a criminal motor vehicle charge in Massachusetts or Rhode Island, contact Cohen Cleary for a consultation. We will evaluate your case, explain the criminal and administrative consequences, and develop a defense strategy that addresses both your court case and your driving privileges.

Frequently Asked Questions About Motor Vehicle Offenses

What is the difference between a civil traffic violation and a criminal motor vehicle offense?

A civil traffic violation, such as a speeding ticket, is handled through the RMV and carries fines and surcharges but not jail time or a criminal record. A criminal motor vehicle offense, such as reckless driving, leaving the scene, or operating after suspension, is prosecuted in court and can result in incarceration, probation, a criminal record, and separate RMV license action. Pleading out a criminal charge carries consequences that extend far beyond the immediate fine.

Can I lose my license even if my criminal case is dismissed?

Yes. The RMV operates independently from the criminal courts. An administrative suspension can remain in effect even after a charge is dismissed or results in a not-guilty verdict. Coordinating both the court defense and the RMV hearing is essential to a complete resolution.

What is a hardship license, and how do I apply for one?

A hardship license allows individuals whose licenses have been suspended to drive for limited purposes, typically employment, education, or medical appointments. The application is made through the RMV Board of Appeal, and approval depends on demonstrating genuine hardship and a responsible driving history. An attorney can prepare the application and present your case at the hearing.

Is it worth hiring a lawyer for a motor vehicle offense?

For criminal motor vehicle charges, counsel is strongly advisable. The potential consequences include jail time, a criminal record, license suspension, and years of elevated insurance premiums. An experienced attorney can identify weaknesses in the prosecution's case, negotiate reduced charges, coordinate the RMV process, and protect your driving record and criminal history.