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Legal Alcohol Limit for Motorists Returns

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A law enforcement grade Breathalyzer **Elza Fiúza**

The legal alcohol limit for motorists has been reintroduced under new legislation signed by President Vladimir Putin, while penalties for drunk driving and a whole host of other driving offenses have been strengthened, Kommersant reported Thursday.

In 2010, a law introduced under then-President Dmitry Medvedev forbid motorists from driving with any alcohol whatsoever in their systems. Until then, drivers could get away with a blood alcohol content of up to .3 grams of alcohol per liter of blood.

It was initially assumed that a legal limit for blood alcohol content would be introduced, but the idea was not adopted because drivers will only have blood tests taken if they are deemed unable to use a breathalyzer, for example, if they are unconscious following a crash.

The new law that came into effect Wednesday says that drivers who exhale less than 0.16 mg of alcohol per liter of air into a breathalyzer will now be considered sober and will not incur any penalties. Also, those punished in line with the previous zero-tolerance policy could also get a reprieve.

From Sept. 1, 2013, drivers who have been deprived of their licenses for registering 0.16 mg of alcohol or less in breath-tests can appeal the decision in court and get their licenses back, the report said.

However, the return of the legal limit is not a sign of a slackening of punishments of road violations.

The minimum fine will be raised from 100 to 500 rubles ($3 to $15) for exceeding the speed limit by between 20 and 40 kilometers per hour, turning on a section of the road where it is not allowed, and failing to indicate. Talking on a mobile telephone while driving will incur a minimum fine of 1,500 rubles, instead of 300 rubles. More stringent punishments for driving without documents, and driving without wearing a seat-belt have also been introduced. These laws also come into effect from September.

Drivers caught drunk behind the wheel for the first time will be fined 30,000 rubles and will lose their licenses for between one-and-a-half and two years. If these offenses are repeated, the fine will be raised to 50,000 rubles and the driver will be stripped of his license for up to three years.

Previously, the law took away the right to drive for up to 2 years with no fines being imposed.

To get revoked licenses back, drivers will have to retake the driving test and undergo a medical examination if the document was seized for drunk driving.

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