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STOP! Or pay extra \$65 fine

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Ticket for running light jumps to \$178.50 in Lee

TALLAHASSEE — The cost of running a red light will go up this weekend.

Starting Saturday, the base fine for running a red light will increase from \$60 to \$125 under a new law meant to increase the amount of money going to trauma centers.

The higher fine is expected to raise an estimated \$600,000 this fiscal year. The new fine doesn't include court costs that are added on to tickets and vary by county.

In Lee County, fines for a moving violation — which includes running a red light — will increase from a current base fine of \$113.50 to \$178.50.

"The fines do vary from county to county," said Lt. Darren Sapp of the Florida Highway Patrol. "It depends on what county you're in to determine the cost of the ticket."

Nearly 300,000 drivers were ticketed for running a red light in Florida in 2003, the last year for which statistics are available.

Two Cape Coral residents and a police official wonder if the increase will make a difference.

"I don't think it will change things much. People run red lights all the time and don't get caught, so I don't think it will matter," said Ed Fluery, 52.

"I hope it helps but I don't see many cops chasing down red light runners in the first place. But with this being an incentive, maybe they will be more aggressive in their pursuits," said Jane Landers, 61.

"I think there are so many variables going into decision making while driving an automobile, I really don't know if people think about the financial deterrents," Cape Coral police chief Dan Alexander said. "What makes more of a deterrent is the possible suspension of a driver's license."

Fort Myers resident Jim Keohane doubted the increased fines would be an effective deterrent. "What stops people is watching someone get hit," he continued. "That'll stop you."

Sgt. Randy Jelks of the Fort Myers Police Department agrees. "I don't think it'll be a deterrent," he said. "Everyone's in a hurry and it's hard to slow them down."

— The Associated Press and The News-Press staff writers Brian P. Watson and Mary Hawk contributed to this report.