

Bail Bond Agents: The Good, Bad And Not-so-pretty

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Bail bond agents are not your friend, not your attorney or your confidant or your confessor. But he is, when you need him, much better than all those. Because if you land in jail, he's the one person who will travel through the flames to get you out.

A good bail bondsman will have reasonable rates, require only fair collateral, and be available at any time of the night or day because you don't always get arrested during normal business hours. A good bail bonds agent will get you out as quickly as possible, barreling through the bureaucracy that doesn't care that you are locked up in a very ugly place.

But you in turn need to have the right expectations. Legally, the amount of bail is determined by the judge. The catch is it can take several days before a judge actually has time to hear the case in order to set it.

Under U.S. federal law a person taken to jail has to be brought 'without unnecessary delay before the nearest available ... magistrate'. Most states follow the federal rule. But 'unnecessary' can be up to 48 hours, not counting weekends or holidays.

Luckily, most courts have set 'bail schedules' that determine bail amount for a common list of offenses. That schedule acts as a guideline for the bail bondsman as well. They typically get 10% of the bond amount as a fee for taking the risk. Incidentally, most don't take credit cards or personal checks.

Bail bond agents, who in effect are money lenders, have a serious responsibility and carry considerable risk. They're responsible for seeing that defendants show up for trial. When defendants fail to, the bail bondsman forfeits the bail.

As a result, they typically require good security before committing to guarantee funds. That security, or collateral, can be savings, a lien on property - jewelry, a boat, a house, the list is endless - or any other attachable asset that will allow them to recoup their money, should you flee the law.

Bail bondsmen have one other means of protecting their investment, one you don't want to learn about first hand. Should you decide not to show up for court on the appointed day, you might just be visited by a bounty hunter (employed by the bail bondsman) to compel you to attend. Bounty hunters are not known for being gentle people.

Bail bondsmen often have offices near the local courthouse, but can be found through the phone directory or online. Like any business service, it's best to get a good reference rather than choosing one blind. It's also a good idea - just as with having an attorney or doctor - to have one picked out before you need him.

At the moment you need him is not the ideal time to be making that choice. Plan ahead. This article is brought to you by bonds-any-time.com If you're looking for more information about bail bonds feel free to visit our website.