

FACT SHEET

License Plate Re-Issuance

Act 133 of 2008 eliminated the requirement for PennDOT to re-issue license plates every 10 years. The new law allows an authorized representative of the Department or law enforcement to determine that a license plate is illegible. Effective January 26, 2009, when a vehicle is inspected, the inspection mechanic will determine if the license plate is legible from a reasonable distance (one or more letters or numerals cannot be recognized from 50 feet). For those vehicles bearing an illegible license plate, the mechanic will complete a portion of a postcard that identifies the vehicle, sign it and present it to the vehicle owner. The vehicle owner is then responsible for signing and returning the postcard to PennDOT in order to receive a new license plate, free of charge.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Can a vehicle fail inspection for having an illegible license plate?

A. No. The Vehicle Equipment and Inspection Regulations state that the only time a vehicle will fail an inspection is if the license plate is hanging loosely, the license plate is not in agreement with the numbers on the registration card, the license plate is obscured or the license plate lamp, if originally equipped, does not illuminate the license plate.

Q. What happens if a vehicle owner does not send in the postcard?

A. The operator of the vehicle would be in violation of Section 1332 of the Pennsylvania Vehicle Code, which may result in a \$100 fine.

Q. What does a vehicle owner do with the old license plate?

A. It should be destroyed or returned to PennDOT to be recycled.

Q. If a vehicle has a Special Fund (e.g. Wildlife Resource) or a Special Organization (e.g. Penn State Alumni) plate requiring replacement, what type of plate will the owner receive?

A. The vehicle owner will receive a free standard issue plate. If another special fund or special organization plate is wanted, the vehicle owner must reapply and pay the applicable fees.

Q. Are there any types of plates that will be replaced with the same letter/number configuration?

A. Yes. If the vehicle owner has a personalized (vanity) plate, they will receive a replacement plate bearing the same letters and/or numerals, free of charge. If a personalized plate is being replaced, the vehicle owner and mechanic should be sure any spaces or dashes are listed in the proper location on the postcard.

Q. After the owner applies for a new plate, how long will it take to receive the plate?

A. Once PennDOT receives the request; it could take up to 15 days for the registrant to receive their standard issue plate and between 4-6 weeks for a vanity plate.

Q. What does a vehicle owner do if their vehicle is not due for inspection and believes they are in need of a replacement plate?

A. The vehicle owner may visit any official Pennsylvania inspection station for verification that the plate is illegible and receive a postcard from the station or have a law enforcement official verify the need for a replacement on Form MV-44 (obtained by the vehicle owner from PennDOT's Driver and Vehicle Services web site at www.dmv.state.pa.us) and return the postcard or Form MV-44 to PennDOT.

Additional questions may be directed to PennDOT's Customer Call Center at 1-800-932-4600.

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