

Temporary Driver's License Frequently Asked Questions

(Photo License Center Technology/Equipment Upgrade)

In late October 2007, as part of an effort to make our products more secure, PennDOT implemented new photo technology and equipment at its 97 Photo License Centers across the commonwealth. The implementation of the new photo technology and equipment was completed in March 2008.

Along with this upgrade, all driver's license (DL) products, including photo identification (Photo ID) cards, are outfitted with a new overlay and security features, which aids in mitigating the risk for fraud. These are subtle changes that do not impact PennDOT's customers.

In addition to the new overlay and security features on all driver's license products, PennDOT is issuing temporary driver's licenses and Photo ID cards to individuals who have never had a Pennsylvania DL or Photo ID card, i.e. new drivers and new residents. The temporary DL or Photo ID card is a valid credential for 15 days.

While the customer is at a PennDOT Driver License Center, all initial verifications to prove identity and residency prior to issuing the temporary DL or Photo ID card (i.e. verification of Social Security number, birth certificate, immigration/naturalization credentials) is completed. Using state-of-the-art facial recognition technology, the 15-day period is used to validate the individual's photograph does not match another photograph in PennDOT's database under a different driver name(s), thereby further aiding PennDOT in identifying individuals who have potentially committed identity theft. Once this validation is completed, individuals receive their permanent DL or Photo ID card in the mail within 15 days. In addition, PennDOT also uses this state-of-the-art facial recognition technology for the same purpose when an individual has their photo taken for their driver's license/identification card renewal.

The front and back of the temporary DL/Photo ID card has the same functionality as the current Pennsylvania DL/Photo ID card and looks the same, except the banners are gray, the word "temporary" is printed in red across the front and the expiration date is outlined in red. The product can be used by any business to validate name, age, address, etc., just as a permanent DL/Photo ID card.

Q: Why did PennDOT put new equipment in their Photo License Centers?

A: The equipment/software used to produce driver's licenses/identification cards was in place for over six years and was old and outdated. This technology refresh replaced every piece of equipment used to produce a driver's license/identification card.

Q: Why are you issuing temporary products?

A: Issuing a temporary product provides PennDOT sufficient time to use state-of-the-art facial recognition technology to ensure the individual's photo does not match another photograph in PennDOT's database under a different name(s). This new process identifies individuals who have potentially committed identity theft.

Q: How do I know if I will be receiving a temporary driver's license?

A: You are issued a temporary driver's license/identification card if you never had a Pennsylvania driver's license or identification card, i.e. new drivers and new residents.

Q: What should I do if I do not get my permanent driver's license in the mail within 15 days?

A: If you do not receive your permanent driver's license, you should call PennDOT's Customer Call Center at 1-800-932-4600 to inquire on the status. The Call Center hours of operation are Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Q: Why can't PennDOT check my photo against their records while I am at the Driver License Center?

A: The time required to query millions of photos in our database would drastically slow down the process at a Photo Center. For this reason, a temporary product is being issued and the validation is completed before issuing a permanent product.

Q: What will happen if my photo matches another record?

A: The records are investigated, and depending on the outcome of the investigation, the appropriate action is taken.

Q: Will businesses accept temporary products as proof of identity?

A: Before a temporary product is issued, all verifications to prove identity and residency are completed (i.e. verification of Social Security number, birth certificate, immigration/naturalization credentials, and residency documents). Therefore, businesses should recognize the temporary product as an official PennDOT document.