

FACT SHEET

Registration Plate Re-Issuance

A registration plate is deemed illegible when one or more numbers or letters cannot be recognized from 50 feet or if the registration plate shows any blistering, peeling, discoloration or loss of reflectivity. When a registration plate becomes illegible, PennDOT has two main ways of getting them replaced. First, the law allows PennDOT to reissue a registration plate upon request of a vehicle owner when an authorized representative of PennDOT or law enforcement determines that a registration plate is illegible. Vehicle safety inspection mechanics are authorized representatives of PennDOT and may determine if the registration plate is legible.

To apply for a free replacement of your current registration plate, the vehicle owner should print [Form MV-46, "Application for Replacement of Illegible Registration Plate,"](#) obtained from PennDOT's Driver and Vehicle Services website at www.pa.gov/dmv and either take it to a law enforcement official or a certified inspection station to verify the need for a replacement due to illegibility. The vehicle owner is then responsible for signing and returning the completed [Form MV-46](#) to PennDOT in order to receive a replacement registration plate free of charge.

Second, the law also allows PennDOT to order a general reissuance. Standard issue passenger registration plates that start with the tag configuration 'G', 'H', 'J', 'K', and truck registration plates that start with tag configuration 'Y', are the oldest on the road and need to be replaced. If you have a standard issue registration plate beginning with a 'G', 'H', 'J', 'K' or 'Y', you will get a new registration plate the next time your registration plate is transferred to a different vehicle. Passenger registration plates that start with a tag configuration 'D' are the oldest plates on the road. PennDOT has begun replacing the 'D' configuration through the mail. Customers will receive a letter informing them when they should expect to receive their new plate.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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

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

Q. What happens if a vehicle owner does not send in Form MV-46?

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 registration plate?

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A. It should be destroyed or returned to PennDOT to be recycled. Old registration plates may be returned to: Bureau of Motor Vehicles, Return Tag Unit, P.O. Box 68597, Harrisburg, PA 17106-8597.

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

A. The vehicle owner will receive the same type of registration plate they currently have. The configuration will not be the same if the registration plate has been redesigned, they will receive the new design. However, if the registration plate type is no longer available, they will receive a standard issue plate.

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

A. Yes. If the vehicle owner has a personalized registration plate, they will receive a replacement registration plate bearing the same letters and/or numerals, free of charge. If a personalized registration plate is being replaced, the vehicle owner's inspection mechanic should complete [Form MV-46](#), Sections A, B, and C, and the law enforcement official or inspection mechanic should be sure any spaces or dashes are listed in the proper location on Form MV-46. The customer must also include a photo of their personalized registration plate.

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

A. Once PennDOT receives the request, it could take up to 15 days for the registrant to receive their standard issue registration plate and between 6-8 weeks for a personalized registration 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 registration plate?

A. It is unlawful to display on a vehicle a registration plate that is obscured or otherwise illegible. If the registration plate cannot be recognized from a distance, or if the registration plate shows any blistering, peeling, discoloration or loss of reflectivity, the vehicle owner should print [Form MV-46](#), obtained from PennDOT's Driver and Vehicle Services website at www.pa.gov/dmv and either take it to a law enforcement official or a certified inspection station to verify the need for a replacement due to illegibility. The vehicle owner is then responsible for signing and returning the completed Form MV-46 to PennDOT in order to receive a replacement registration plate free of charge.

*Additional questions may be directed to PennDOT's Customer Call Center at 717-412-5300.
TTY callers — please dial 711 to reach us.*