§451. Issuance and form of registration plates

1. Authority to issue registration plates. The Secretary of State shall provide a new general issue of registration plates periodically as determined by the Legislature. Each new general issue must be easily distinguishable by color from the preceding general issue.
[PL 1993, c. 683, Pt. A, §2 (NEW); PL 1993, c. 683, Pt. B, §5 (AFF).]

1-A. New general issue. The Secretary of State shall provide for a new general issue of registration plates and shall begin issuing the new plates no later than May 1, 2025. The Secretary of State shall complete the issuance of new plates before July 31, 2026 to all vehicles required to obtain new plates.
[PL 2023, c. 421, §1 (RPR).]

1-B. New dealer plate issue. The Secretary of State shall provide for a new issue of dealer plates and shall begin issuing the new dealer plates no later than December 31, 2000 to all dealers licensed pursuant to chapter 9, subchapter III.
[PL 1999, c. 473, Pt. G, §1 (AMD).]

2. Furnishing registration plates. The Secretary of State shall furnish registration plates, without charge, with each registration except to dealers, manufacturers and holders of transporter registration plates.
[PL 1993, c. 683, Pt. A, §2 (NEW); PL 1993, c. 683, Pt. B, §5 (AFF).]

3. Annual registration plates or devices. The Secretary of State shall issue new registration plates or a suitable device in lieu of new registration plates each calendar year. The plate or device must clearly indicate the year or period for which it is issued. The Secretary of State may issue permanent registration plates designed to provide for renewal by changing the expiration date without issuing new registration plates. A device attached to the appropriate vehicle or registration plate is proper registration for the period specified.
[PL 1993, c. 683, Pt. A, §2 (NEW); PL 1993, c. 683, Pt. B, §5 (AFF).]

4. Registration plate design. Registration plates must be designed as follows.

A. Registration plates must bear the year of issue or the last 2 numerals of that year and the word "Maine" in letters of at least 3/4 inch in height centered at the top of the registration plate. [PL 2023, c. 421, §2 (AMD).]

B. Except on motorcycle plates, registration plate numbers may not be substantially less than 3 inches high. [PL 1993, c. 683, Pt. A, §2 (NEW); PL 1993, c. 683, Pt. B, §5 (AFF).]

C. On registration plates issued for private use, the word "Vacationland" must be centered at the bottom, except, when the Secretary of State determines that for other than passenger vehicles, that space may be used for class identifiers. [PL 1997, c. 776, §8 (AMD).]

D. [PL 1995, c. 645, Pt. C, §2 (AMD); PL 1995, c. 645, Pt. C, §16 (AFF); MRSA T. 29-A §451, sub-§4, ¶ D (RP).]
[PL 2023, c. 421, §2 (AMD).]

4-A. New general issue design. Notwithstanding subsection 4, the design of registration plates issued pursuant to subsection 1-A is governed by this subsection.

A. Registration plates must bear the year of issue or the last 2 numerals of that year and the word "Maine" in letters of at least 3/4 inch in height centered at the top of the registration plate. [PL 2023, c. 421, §3 (RPR).]

B. Except on motorcycle plates, registration numbers may not be substantially less than 3 inches high. [PL 2023, c. 421, §3 (RPR).]

C. On registration plates issued for private use and trucks, the word "Vacationland" must be centered at the bottom in letters not less than 3/4 inch in height, except when the Secretary of State determines that, for other than passenger vehicles, that space may be used for class codes. [PL 2023, c. 421, §3 (RPR).]

D. A new registration plate must have a buff neutral shaded background that does not interfere with any identifying characteristics on the plate, a distinct border and:

(1) Blue identification numbers and letters, a representation of an eastern white pine tree and a blue star representing the North Star on the side of the plate; or

(2) Blue identification numbers and letters with no other features. [PL 2023, c. 421, §3 (RPR).]

E. The Secretary of State shall devise, with the advice of the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over transportation matters, a numbering system suitable for a new general issue of registration plates. [PL 2023, c. 421, §3 (RPR).]

[PL 2023, c. 421, §3 (RPR).]

5. Special classes of registration plates. A vehicle required to be registered in a special class under this Title may display only the number plates designed for that special class of registration. If a vehicle registered for hire is disabled due to an accident or mechanical malfunction, another vehicle of the same passenger capacity may be substituted temporarily. The substitute vehicle is subject to the financial responsibility requirements in section 1611. Notwithstanding this subsection, the Secretary of State may issue a temporary credential in lieu of a special class of registration plate. The Secretary of State may adopt rules to implement this subsection. Rules adopted pursuant to this subsection are routine technical rules as defined in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

[PL 2003, c. 434, §7 (AMD); PL 2003, c. 434, §37 (AFF).]

6. Plates to be manufactured at Bolduc Correctional Facility. The Secretary of State or the duly designated official in charge of vehicle registration shall purchase and cause to be installed at the Bolduc Correctional Facility the necessary equipment and materials for the production of all vehicle registration plates used in the State. Only plates that cannot be produced at Bolduc Correctional Facility and plates for which anticipated demand is below a minimum number determined by the Secretary of State may be purchased for state use.

The Warden of the State Prison has charge of operations at the Bolduc Correctional Facility relative to the manufacture of all plates made for the State. The Warden of the State Prison, with the consent of the Secretary of State, may employ for limited periods of time a supervisor for the purpose of instructing residents in the operation of making such plates.

For purposes of this subsection, "resident" means an individual who resides in the Bolduc Correctional Facility.

[PL 2023, c. 421, §4 (AMD).]

7. Rules. The Secretary of State may adopt rules to protect the integrity of registration plates or provide for the issue of replacement plates.

[PL 1993, c. 683, Pt. A, §2 (NEW); PL 1993, c. 683, Pt. B, §5 (AFF).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 1993, c. 683, §A2 (NEW). PL 1993, c. 683, §B5 (AFF). PL 1995, c. 65, §A86 (AMD). PL 1995, c. 65, §§A153,C15 (AFF). PL 1995, c. 645, §§C1-3 (AMD). PL 1995, c. 645, §C16 (AFF). PL 1997, c. 311, §1 (AMD). PL 1997, c. 776, §§7,8 (AMD). PL 1999, c. 473, §G1 (AMD). PL 2001, c. 671, §6 (AMD). PL 2003, c. 434, §7 (AMD). PL 2003, c. 434, §37 (AFF). PL 2023, c. 421, §§1-4 (AMD).

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