

# FACT SHEET

## Personalized Registration Plate Guidelines

This fact sheet has been developed by the Bureau of Motor Vehicles to assist with how to apply for and determine what constitutes an acceptable application of a personal registration plate.

### PRIMARY PURPOSE

- The primary purpose of registration marks is to provide a State-issued, visible, and unique alpha-numeric identification mark for display in a uniform manner on each motor vehicle registered by the PennDOT. Registration marks are used primarily for PennDOT, law enforcement, motor vehicle and traffic safety, and other identification purposes.
- A secondary purpose, only for those motor vehicle owners who opt for and pay the appropriate fee pursuant to Section 1341 of the Vehicle Code, 75 Pa.C.S. §1341 (Special registration plates), is to display personalized, State-issued, visible, and unique alpha-numeric identification marks of their own requests, in a uniform manner on each motor vehicle registered by the PennDOT. Personalized marks are also for PennDOT, law enforcement, motor vehicle and traffic safety, and other identification purposes. The Director, Bureau of Motor Vehicles exercises sole control, in accordance with Section 1341, 67 Pa. Code §49.3 (Personal registration plates) and these guidelines, to determine which registration marks shall be issued.

### APPLYING FOR A PERSONAL REGISTRATION PLATES

- To apply for a standard personalized registration plate, Form MV-904, "Application for Special Registration Plate," must be completed. Personalized registration plate applicants must have a valid registration plate, which the applicant shall retain pending receipt of the requested personal plate.
- Customers can go to PennDOT's driver and vehicle services website and check the availability of a personalized registration plate. The [Personalized Registration Plate Availability Tool](#) link is on the list of services under the Online Driver and Vehicle Services heading.
- Requests for personal registration plates are restricted to:
  - Passenger vehicles
  - Motorcycles
  - Motor homes
  - Trailers
  - Trucks with a gross weight of not more than 14,000 pounds

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## **COMBINATIONS AND SUBMITTANCE PERSONALIZED OF REGISTRATION PLATES**

- Personalized standard registration plates may contain up to seven letters and numbers in combination. One hyphen or one space is permitted, but not both. Special characters are not available. A personal motorcycle registration plate may contain up to five letters and numbers in combination. The number of spaces available for personalization on specialty registration plates varies, please refer to the application for details. A hyphen or space may be used as part of the plate configuration and counts as one of the available spaces for personalization.
- Personalized registration plate requests are processed on a first-come, first-served basis.
- PennDOT has a “Do Not Issue” list of unacceptable configurations. A newly submitted configuration is checked against the list to determine if it should be immediately rejected.
- Once PennDOT receives a completed application and payment, the customer’s personalized plate configuration is reserved on PennDOT’s system unless the configuration is on the “Do Not Issue” list.
- If the configuration is on the “Do not Issue” list, the system will not allow it to be entered. The customer application is returned to the customer with an explanation of why the application was not processed.
- A team of PennDOT staff completes a thorough review of the personalized license plate requests.
- PennDOT staff utilizes many resources in reviewing personalized license plate requests, such as an Internet Acronym Dictionary, Slang/Euphemism Dictionary, translations from foreign languages, an upside down or reverse reading of the requested configuration, etc.
- If PennDOT has further questions on the configuration, a staff member may contact the customer by phone for further clarification.
- If a request is rejected, the customer will receive a letter indicating the request has been denied with an explanation of why.  
If the customer writes to or calls PennDOT about their rejected configuration, a staff member will talk to them about it.

## **REASONS FOR REJECTION OF PERSONALIZED REGISTRATION PLATES**

- Potentially misleading to law enforcement.
- Previously issued or almost identical to another plate previously issued so as to create confusion.
- A combination giving the appearance that the vehicle is associated with law enforcement or other government entities.
- Profane, lewd, lascivious, obscene, or vulgar.
- Containing sexual innuendo or sexual connotations.
- A reference to excretory functions.
- A racial, ethnic, religious, lifestyle, or gender epithet.
- An expression of contempt for or ridicule or superiority of a class of persons, including a particular ethnic or other group.
- Related to alcohol abuse or illegal drugs or substances.
- Related to illegal activities, including organized crime associations and gang or gang terminology.
- Libelous or slanderous.
- Directed to and likely to incite imminent lawless action.
- Words which inflict injury or tend to incite an immediate breach of the peace.
- Contrary to PennDOT’s mission to promote motor vehicle and traffic safety.

- A combination that is currently reserved for other plate types pursuant to law, these guidelines, or as determined by the Director, Bureau of Motor Vehicles; or likely to interfere with the primary purpose of registration marks.

## **FEES**

- The fee for a personalized registration plate can be found on Form MV-70S, "Bureau of Motor Vehicles Schedule of Fees," found on PennDOT's driver and vehicle services website ([www.dmv.pa.gov](http://www.dmv.pa.gov)).

*Please Note: Subject to the criteria set forth above, PennDOT shall not deny an application for a personalized plate because the configuration relates to religion or lack thereof in any manner.*