

A Message to Massachusetts Motorists from Rachel Kaprielian, Registrar of Motor Vehicles



Dear Motorist,

This Driver's Manual provides important information about the many services offered by the Registry of Motor Vehicles. Whether you have questions about the documents you need to apply for a driver's license, how to renew a registration, or when you need to have your vehicle inspected, the answers are all in here. I encourage you to read it thoroughly and keep it handy as a future resource.

The RMV Driver's Manual can help you prepare for a visit to our 35 branches, our website, or a phone call to our customer service center. We know from experience that informed customers help us provide quicker, more efficient service and reduce the possibility of a return visit.

The RMV has also included all the rules of the road that apply to motoring on the roads of the Commonwealth in an effort to help reduce crashes and injuries. In today's world, driving a car is a necessary part of life. Yet owning a vehicle and holding a driver's license are privileges that come with a good deal of responsibility. I urge you to not only become familiar with the laws, but always act responsibly behind the wheel.

The RMV has a professionally-trained staff of dedicated public servants who will give you pleasant and efficient service. Please remember that, since 9/11, more rigorous standards are in place for ensuring your driver's license and identification documents are protected against identity theft. While this may make your trip to the RMV longer, we hope that it will also keep you safer.

Don't forget to take advantage of our numerous on-line transactions at www.mass.gov/rmv and don't hesitate to let us know how we can provide you with better service.

Safe Driving,

Rachel Kaprielian

Rachel Kaprielian
Registrar

Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Sharing the Road

A User's Manual for Public Ways

Most public ways, including urban streets, country lanes, main roads, secondary roads, and suburban or rural roads, are meant to be shared by all of us. "Us" includes pedestrians, persons riding on bicycles or motorcycles, persons riding in passenger vehicles or buses, and persons operating commercial motor vehicles or trailers, or combinations of those vehicles. Some ways, such as Interstate highways and expressways, are designed exclusively for use by motor vehicles and trailers traveling at high speeds. Other public ways are specifically designed for slower speeds or for travel by lighter vehicles and may restrict or prohibit certain vehicles. Public ways come in various lengths and widths with various features: one-way, two-way, multiple lanes, High Occupancy Vehicle lanes (HOV), center dividers, sidewalks, bicycle lanes, and hard or soft shoulders. However the public way is laid out, it is meant to be used by people and the various types of vehicles that may propel them along if they are not on foot.

Although the bulk of this Manual provides information about the use of public ways for motor vehicles and trailers, the goal of the RMV in producing it is to make all users of public ways aware that our public streets and roads are meant to be shared except where the law provides for limited uses.

Note: See page 77 for information on a new law on bicycle safety that affects bicyclists, motorists, and pedestrians.

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Chapter 1 Obtaining Your License | 1 |
| License Descriptions and Classifications | 2 |
| Who Needs a Massachusetts License? | 2 |
| Who is Eligible for a Massachusetts License? | 3 |
| License Classes | 5 |
| Endorsements | 6 |
| Restrictions | 6 |
| Massachusetts IDs and Liquor IDs | 8 |
| Massachusetts ID | 8 |
| Massachusetts Liquor ID | 8 |
| Identification Requirements | 9 |
| Document Requirements Chart | 10 |
| Acceptable Forms of Identification | 12 |
| Social Security Numbers and License Numbers | 16 |
| Rejected Documents and Rejected Applications | 17 |
| Penalties for Presenting Fraudulent Documents | 19 |
| License/ID Fees | 19 |
| Junior Operator License Law | 20 |
| Requirements to Obtain a JOL | 21 |
| JOL License Restrictions | 21 |
| Applying for a License | 22 |
| Getting a Learner's Permit | 23 |
| Driving With Your Permit | 24 |
| Taking the Road Test | 26 |
| Receiving Your New License | 32 |
| Converting Your License | 33 |
| Out-of-State Conversions | 34 |
| Junior Operator License Conversion | 35 |
| Permit Conversion | 35 |
| Conversions from a U.S. Territory, Canada, or Mexico | 35 |
| Other Foreign Licenses | 36 |
| Renewing Your License | 36 |
| SSN Verification on Renewal | 37 |
| Driving Record Check on Renewal | 37 |
| Other Reasons for Non-Renewal | 38 |
| Renewals for Military Personnel | 38 |
| Replacing Your License | 38 |
| Duplicate License | 38 |
| Temporary Replacements | 38 |
| Replacements for Military Personnel | 39 |
| Surrendering Your License | 39 |
| Renewing Your Massachusetts Identification Card | 39 |
| Change of Address or Name | 40 |
| Change of Gender Designation | 40 |
| Voter Registration | 41 |
| Organ and Tissue Donor Program | 41 |
| Chapter 2 Keeping Your License | 43 |
| Motor Vehicle Violations and Penalties | 44 |
| Civil Motor Vehicle Infractions | 44 |
| Criminal Violations | 45 |
| Out-of-State Violations | 46 |
| At-Fault Accidents | 46 |

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Surchargeable Events | 46 |
| Driver Retraining Course | 47 |
| Driving Records | 47 |
| License Suspension or Revocation | 48 |
| Reasons for License Suspension | 48 |
| When Your License Is Suspended or Revoked | 52 |
| Alcohol, Drugs, and Driving | 53 |
| Alcohol | 54 |
| Ignition Interlock Devices | 56 |
| Buying, Possessing, or Transporting Alcohol | 58 |
| False or Altered Licenses/Identification Cards | 58 |
| Illegal Drugs, Medicine, and Other Controlled Substances | 58 |
| Reasons for License Nonrenewal | 59 |
| Chapter 3 Safety First | 61 |
| Passenger Vehicle Safety | 62 |
| Safety Belt Law | 62 |
| How Safety Belts Work | 64 |
| Myths About Safety Belts | 64 |
| Air-Bag Safety | 65 |
| Inside the Vehicle | 66 |
| Driving Defensively | 66 |
| Your Health and Physical Condition | 67 |
| Checking Your Vehicle's Condition | 67 |
| Safe Distances Around Your Car | 68 |
| Braking and Stopping | 69 |
| Using Your Horn, Headlights, and Emergency Signals | 70 |
| Night Driving | 70 |
| Driving in Rain or Fog | 71 |
| Winter Driving | 72 |
| Pedestrians | 72 |
| Bicycles and Mopeds | 73 |
| Motorcycles | 74 |
| Motorcycle Safety | 75 |
| Riding Gear | 75 |
| Carrying a Passenger | 76 |
| Rider Training | 76 |
| Moped (Motorized Bicycle) Safety | 76 |
| Motorized Scooter Safety | 77 |
| New Bicycle Safety Law | 77 |
| Chapter 4 Rules of the Road | 79 |
| Speed Limits | 80 |
| Traffic Signals | 81 |
| Motor Vehicle Signals | 81 |
| Pedestrian Signals | 82 |
| Traffic Signs | 83 |
| Stop and Yield Signs | 86 |
| Regulatory Signs | 86 |
| Warning Signs | 86 |
| Guide Signs | 86 |
| Construction and Maintenance Road Work Warnings | 86 |
| Railroad Crossings | 87 |
| Pavement Markings | 87 |
| White Lane Lines | 87 |

| | |
|--|------------|
| Yellow Lane Lines | 88 |
| Words and Symbols | 89 |
| Stop Lines and Crosswalks | 89 |
| Lanes, Intersections, and Turns | 89 |
| Signaling | 89 |
| Using Lanes | 90 |
| Highway Driving | 91 |
| Intersections | 92 |
| Turns | 93 |
| Right-of-Way Rules | 95 |
| Rules for Passing | 97 |
| Road Respect/Sharing the Road | 98 |
| Parking | 102 |
| Parking Regulations | 103 |
| Miscellaneous Rules of the Road | 104 |
| Rules for Pedestrians | 104 |
| Rules for Bicyclists | 105 |
| Chapter 5 Special Driving Situations | 107 |
| Your Health and Physical Condition | 108 |
| Checking Your Vehicle's Condition | 108 |
| Moving Emergency Vehicle | 109 |
| Stationary Emergency Vehicle | 109 |
| If You are Stopped by a Police Officer | 110 |
| Driving Emergencies | 112 |
| Traffic Accidents | 114 |
| If You Are Involved in an Accident | 115 |
| If You Witness an Accident | 116 |
| Reporting an Accident | 116 |
| Chapter 6 Owning a Vehicle | 117 |
| Vehicle Registration | 118 |
| New Registrations | 118 |
| Registration Renewal | 119 |
| Duplicate Registration | 121 |
| Canceling a Registration | 121 |
| Transferring a Registration to a Newly Acquired Vehicle | 122 |
| Registration Policies for New Residents | 122 |
| Motorcycles, Mopeds (Motorized Bicycles), and Motorized Scooters | 124 |
| Low Speed Vehicles | 125 |
| Segways | 125 |
| Special Design Plates | 126 |
| "Green Driving" Tips | 127 |
| Disability Plates and Placards | 128 |
| Eligibility Standards | 129 |
| Applying for Plates and Placards | 130 |
| Vehicle Inspections | 131 |
| Commercial Vehicles | 132 |
| Trailers | 132 |
| Lemon Aid Law | 132 |
| Titles | 132 |
| Basic Title Transactions | 133 |
| When You Sell a Vehicle | 139 |
| Insurance and Merit Rating | 139 |
| Private Passenger Automobile Insurance and Your Driving Record | 139 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| Merit Rating Plans | 140 |
| Safe Driver Insurance Plan | 140 |
| The Merit Rating Board | 140 |
| Contact Information | 141 |
| Appendices | 142 |
| A. Parties to the 1949 Road Traffic Convention and the 1943 Inter-American Automotive Traffic Convention | 142 |
| B. Sample Permit Knowledge Tests | 145 |
| C. RMV Customer Services | 147 |
| D. RMV Full Service/Limited Service Branches | 148 |
| E. RMV License and Identification Cards | 150 |
| F. Street Signs | 151 |
| G. RMV Special Registration Plates | 152 |

*This document is published by the Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV), Commonwealth of Massachusetts, for the benefit of residents and visitors alike. While it contains a great deal of information about RMV policies and state laws, it is important to note that this is **not** a legal document. Every effort is made to present the most accurate, error free, and up-to-date information. However, RMV policies and fees change from time to time, as do laws governing motor vehicles.*

The RMV will make every effort to post information about changes to the fees, policies, procedures or laws referenced in this Driver's Manual that may affect your ability to obtain a Learner's Permit, Driver's License or Identification Card. Relevant changes will be posted on the RMV's website at www.mass.gov/rmv. If you do not have access to a computer, you may call the RMV's Phone Center at 617-351-4500 (from the 339/617/781/857 area codes) or 800-858-3926 (from all other MA area codes).

The Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV) has changed a great deal since its inception in 1903. There are now nearly five million licensed drivers in our state. And today, more than ever, the Agency is committed to increasing efficiency and improving customer satisfaction through technology and innovative initiatives.

Enhanced computer technology continues to strongly impact customer service. Through the RMV's website (www.mass.gov/rmv), you can conduct such transactions as renewing a registration, renewing a license or Massachusetts Identification Card, ordering a special plate, paying a traffic citation, ordering a duplicate license/ID, changing your address, verifying the issuance of a driver's education certificate, checking the status of a registration or title, or changing your organ donor status. You can also download forms, view this *Driver's Manual*, and learn the latest "rules of the road." Over the Internet, the RMV also invites you to ask questions and offer suggestions for improving RMV services.

To encourage you to avoid unnecessary trips to one of the RMV's branches, the Agency wants you to process some transactions over the phone; you can replace a lost license, pay a citation, order a driving record, schedule a road test, and renew a registration. By mail, you can conduct some title and registration transactions. Through the Electronic Vehicle Registration program, participating automobile dealers and insurance agents can issue new plates and perform registration transfers and renewals.

The RMV will continue to explore other ways to improve its relationship with you.

How to Use This Manual

For *new drivers*, this booklet is a useful tool for understanding the licensing process and for studying the rules of the road. For *experienced drivers*, this booklet offers more than the procedure for obtaining a learner's permit. It provides valuable information on RMV policies, changes to driving laws, and safe driving tips. Keep this manual in your vehicle and refer to it whenever you have a question.

