

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 at our branch locations and through our website at www.mass.gov/rmv. 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 one of our 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. I encourage you to utilize our virtual branch before you stand in line, as most routine RMV services can be completed through the Internet.

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, which now includes a free service you can join that will remind you by email, phone, or text message when your license expires and you need to renew. And please, 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.

Sharing the Road with Bicycles:

In 2009, to further promote safe interactions on our roads between bicycles and motor vehicles, Governor Deval Patrick signed several new laws. These expand the rights of bicyclists and make it easier to cite them for their own traffic violations. They also place new legal responsibilities on motorists.* The changes should help ensure that bicyclists have a safer riding environment. The changes enforce stricter standards on motorists to be alert and careful in the presence of bicycles. For a brief description of these changes, see page 77 and 105.

Attention Motorists:

Bicyclists have a legal right to use all public roads in this state except limited access or express state highways where signs specifically prohibiting bicycles have been posted. Like motorists, they are also required to know and obey traffic laws and regulations. Both bicyclists and motorists need to understand the laws. As a motorist, you need to understand and appreciate that bicyclists are far more vulnerable to injury and death when forced off the road and when in collision with a motor vehicle. Drivers need to know and respect bicyclists' rights and safely share the road with them. You also need to know your own legal responsibilities when driving in the presence of bicycles.

* Chapter 525 of the Acts of 2008; Sections 3 & 11 of Chapter 26 of the Acts of 2009; and Chapter 65 of the Acts of 2009 (which took effect on 1/1/2011).

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*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 (339/617/781/857 area codes) or 1-800-858-3926 (all other area codes). Or, you can call 1-877-RMV-TTDD if you are hearing impaired.

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 pre-stage certain license/ID card transactions and conduct such transactions as scheduling a road test, 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*, learn the latest "rules of the road," and join a free service that will remind you by email, phone, or text message when your license or ID card expires and you need to renew. 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.

