



FAQs about General Registrations and General Registration Plates

The Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV) is often asked questions about Dealer, Repair, Farm, and other types of General Registration Plates. The questions usually relate to who can use the plates and whether the people that use them get special exemptions from taxes or registration fees.

Here are some common Questions and Answers which may be helpful and of interest to General Registration Plate holders, law enforcement officers, insurance agents, and members of the public.

General Registration Plates

Q: I have seen lots of vehicles that have registration plates that say “Dealer” or “Repair” or “Farm.” Why are these plates issued and who are they issued to?

A: The RMV is authorized by [Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 90, Section 5](#) to issue General Registrations and General Registration Number Plates to people engaged in certain occupations who meet the eligibility requirements of the law, including the RMV’s Regulations at [540 CMR 18.00](#). There are currently seven different General Registration Plates that are issued:

- Dealer
- Boat and Boat Trailer Dealer
- Motorcycle Dealer
- Repair
- Farm
- Owner-Contractor
- Transporter

Only one General Registration Plate needs to be attached to a vehicle. Each plate has a large one-letter decal to the left of the registration number indicating the plate-type: Dealer Plates **(D)**; Repair **(R)**; Farm **(F)**; Owner-Contractor **(C)**; Transporter **(T)**; Wholesaler **(W)**; and Manufacturer **(M)**. The color of the decal is changed yearly and is issued when the General Registration is renewed.

Q: How does a business benefit by having one of these plates?

A: A “General Registration” is issued to businesses that qualify under [Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 90, Section 5](#) because the needs of their particular type of business require a different method of registering their vehicles for business use. The motor vehicle registration needs of most businesses are served by the use of a “Commercial” registration plate. The Commercial plate (and most other types of plates) are issued by the RMV and required to be attached to a specific vehicle with an identified vehicle identification number (VIN). The specific registration plate that is

issued may only be attached to that specifically identified (and properly insured) vehicle, and no other. In fact, it is illegal to attach that registration plate to any other vehicle. The primary benefit of a General Registration Plate is that it does **not** have to be attached to any one specific vehicle. Instead, because of the special needs of the qualifying registrant, the general registration plate may be attached to any vehicle that the registrant owns (or in some cases only controls). The types of businesses authorized by law to register their vehicles in this manner typically own (or control) more vehicles than are needed to be registered for business use at any one time. The registrant is issued a **limited number** of registration plates (each containing the registrant's specific registration number) which may be attached to a vehicle the business registrant owns, as needed. The registrant may attach the plate to any of its qualifying vehicles. Once the Plate is attached the vehicle will be considered officially registered and may be operated on public ways.

Some examples include:

- A **Motor Vehicle Dealer** may attach the Dealer Plate to any vehicle it owns and holds for sale in its inventory (an inventory vehicle does not include a vehicle used in the dealer's day-to-day operations), as needed, and the vehicle will be considered legally registered as long as the dealer has the required insurance coverage and is otherwise in compliance with the law;
- A **Farmer** may attach the Farm Plate to any motor vehicle or trailer principally used and dedicated to the farming activity. For Example, a farmer who has three dedicated farm vehicles may not need more than one Farm Plate if the three vehicles will not be used simultaneously. So, a farmer who regularly uses a pick-up truck for farm chores can remove the Farm Plate and attach it to another dedicated farm vehicle when it is needed. Any Farm vehicle being utilized with the Farm Plate must have a Compliance Decal attached.
- A **Repairer** who runs a one-person repair shop may have a tow truck that tows large vehicles and a smaller "ramp" truck that carries a car after it is hauled up the "ramp." This eliminates the need to register each vehicle with a "Commercial" plate if a **Repair Plate** can be attached to either vehicle when needed.
- A **Repairer** may attach (affix) a Repair Plate to a customer's vehicle for the purposes of repair and test drives after repair of the customer's owned vehicle. A Repairer **may not** use a Repair Plate on a vehicle owned by his business except on a tow truck or parts vehicle. To use a Repair Plate on those vehicles, a compliance decal must be attached and a minimum of 1 ½ inch lettering is required on the vehicle.
- An **Owner-Contractor** can display the Owner-Contractor plate on Special Mobile Equipment, mobile construction cranes, or a combination thereof, that is used or

leased exclusively in the Owner-Contractor's principal business. The equipment must be principally designed to conduct excavation or lift building materials at a public or private construction site and is operated on a way for the sole purpose of transportation to or from the construction site and has a gross vehicle weight of at least 12,000 pounds.

- A **Transporter** plate is issued to companies that are engaged principally and substantially in the business of transporting or delivering motor vehicles under their own power not owned by him/her. The plate is displayed on the customer vehicle that is being transported for hire and driven on the road.

To be properly registered, every vehicle operated with a General Registration Number Plate must have sufficient insurance coverage to satisfy Massachusetts law.

Q: What section of the Registry issues General Registration Plates?

A: The Section Five Division (named after the statutory provision that authorizes these plates [Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 90, Section 5](#)).

Q: Who can apply for a General Registration Plate?

A: An applicant for a General Registration Plate must be principally and substantially engaged in the type of business for which the General Registration Plate is sought.

These occupations are:

- Motor Vehicle Dealer
- Repairer
- Owner-Contractor
- Recreational Vehicle and Recreational Trailer Dealer
- Boat and Boat Trailer Dealer
- Transporter
- Manufacturer

The only exception to the requirement that the person be both principally and substantially engaged in the type of business to be eligible for a General Registration plate, is a Farmer. They do not need to be "principally" engaged in farming but DO need to be "substantially" engaged.

Q: Does a person who owns one of these types of businesses automatically qualify for a General Registration and Plate?

A: No. A person in one of these businesses needs to file an application with the Section 5

Division of the RMV. The Section 5 Division will review the application, any required license, and other relevant and/or required documents. If preliminarily acceptable, they forward a request to the State Police so that a Trooper can conduct a site visit of the business premises. The purpose of the visit is to assist the RMV in determining if the applicant is compliant with the requirements, including if they have:

- Suitable premises for the business
- Suitable vehicles for the type of General Registration sought
- Made representations in the application which are not true
- An actual **need** for one or more plates

Q: Can the holder of a General Registration Plate “loan” it to someone else?

A: No. A General Registration plate holder is prohibited from loaning the plate that is registered with the RMV. A General Registration Plate can only be placed on a qualifying vehicle owned (and in some cases controlled) by the registrant.

A Dealer Plate can be attached to a dealer owned vehicle for no more than 5 consecutive days for demonstration or sale related purposes

A General Registration plate holder who “loans” the plate for use by another person on a vehicle not owned by the registrant is violating the law. A violation of these restrictions can result in a suspension or revocation of the General Registration and Plate.

Q: Do vehicles being operated with General Registration Plates have to pass a yearly inspection?

A: All vehicles displaying a General Registration Number Plate need to be inspected except dealer-owned inventory-vehicles and manufacturer-owned vehicles that display “Dealer” plates. Dealer- owned vehicles, once sold to a retail purchaser, will have to be inspected within seven days of the sale date. Manufacturer-owned vehicles which are issued “Dealer” plates with an M decal and are operated for sale and demonstration-related purposes in connection with the manufacturer’s obligation to its dealer network in Massachusetts, will need to be inspected following sale to the ultimate purchaser. Although a dealer-plated vehicle need not have a current inspection sticker, the vehicle must comply with all equipment requirements and may be cited for a violation.

Q: Is it true that General Registration Plate holders must display proof that they paid sales tax and a Title Fee?

A: Most General Registration holders have to display proof of payment of sales tax and Title Fee. The Compliance Decal that is displayed is proof of payment and must be attached to the registrant's vehicle. No Compliance Decal will be issued or renewed if the owner's registration is in "non-renewal" status for non-payment of excise tax or parking tickets or a reinstatement fee from a prior suspension is due.

Some types of registrants or vehicles are exempt from the Compliance Decal requirement. The requirement does not apply to motor vehicles and trailers owned by a dealer and held for demonstration or sale purposes; motor vehicles or trailers controlled, but not owned by a repairer that are being operated or towed solely for repair, testing, alteration, or equipping, or transportation incidental thereto; trailers owned by a dealer of recreational or boat trailers and held for sale or demonstration; motor vehicles operated by a transporter or trailers towed by a transporter; and motor vehicles or trailers classified as implements of husbandry in [Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 90, Section 1](#) are exempt from sales tax by [Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 64, Section 6](#).

Q: Do I need a Compliance Decal?

A: This depends on your type of business and vehicle use. The Compliance Decals are issued to Farm, Owner-Contractor and Repair plateholders. If you use a plate owned by the business and used by the business, the sales tax and title fees are required. The RMV will issue a Compliance Decal as proof of ownership. The decal is proof the vehicle is owned by that business, and the proper title and sales tax fees have been paid. A vehicle lacking a required Compliance Decal will be deemed unregistered, in violation of [Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 90, Section 9](#).

Q: I have seen paper registration plates that say, "Massachusetts Temporary Plate" and they have an expiration date in big print. What kind of plate is this?

A: What you saw is a temporary General Registration Plate made of paper inside a plastic sleeve. It is issued when a General Registration Plate is reported lost or stolen and an immediate replacement is needed. These temporary plates are issued with a 20 -day expiration date. The RMV will manufacture and ship a replacement plate within that period. Once the plate is received, the registrant must call the Section 5 department to activate the plate.

Q: How Does the RMV assign General Registration Plate Numbers?

A: Each registrant is assigned one basic registration number, such as Dealer 123. The first plate issued to the dealer is 123A. Each additional plate that is issued to that dealer (based upon demonstrated need) carries the next letter of the alphabet until 123Y is issued. If a large dealership needs more plates, the RMV will issue 123AA through 123YY.

- Q:** Does the operator of a vehicle displaying a General Registration plate have to carry the Certificate of Registration for the specific plate that is on the vehicle?
- A:** No. The RMV issues only one Certificate of Registration for each master registration number. In the example in the question above, one Certificate is issued for Dealer 123 even if 12 suffix Dealer 123 plates are issued. By law ([Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 90, Section 11](#)), General Registration holders do not have to carry the Certificate of Registration.
- Q:** How does the RMV ensure that plate holders are using the plates responsibly and not just handing them out to friends and relatives?
- A:** All plate holders are aware that it is their responsibility to provide security for the plates issued to them and to be able to account for them when required by the RMV. The Massachusetts State Police conduct site visits at the business premises, and from time to time, conducts an audit of the plates that have been issued and reviews records reporting plates as lost or stolen. If the audit finds discrepancies in security or accounting, the plate holder is scheduled for a Hearing to determine whether the General Registration and General Registration Number Plates should be suspended or revoked. State Police also conduct spot checks to determine compliance. Any plate holder found to be loaning plates will likely have their General Registration suspended or revoked.
- Q:** How does the RMV keep track of all the various registrants and their business locations?
- A:** The Section 5 Division is charged with the responsibility of issuing and overseeing General Registration Plates. The RMV is assisted by a unit of the Massachusetts State Police which does site inspections) when an applicant applies for the initial General Registration or for additional plates and also conducts compliance related site visits of existing plate holders to determine if the holder continues to qualify for the General Registration (e.g., maintaining required facilities and/or equipment or required records according to law) and whether the holder is using the plates on qualified vehicles. If the State Police or local law enforcement believe that a registrant no longer qualifies for the General Registration or they observe a violation of General Registration laws, they may inform the RMV of their findings.
- Q:** What can the RMV do to the holder of a General Registration Plate who misuses the plate or otherwise violates this registration law?
- A:** When the RMV has reason to believe (often obtained from State Police or local law enforcement) that a registrant no longer qualifies or has committed violations of Chapter 90, Section 5 or the RMV regulations, 540 CMR 18.00, the RMV will require the registrant to come in for a hearing pursuant to 540 CMR 9.00 . At the Hearing, the registrant will have an opportunity to be represented by legal counsel and present

witnesses and other evidence as outlined in the regulations. Following the Hearing, if the RMV finds substantial evidence that a violation occurred, they may suspend or revoke any General Registration Plate(s).

Separately, for certain violations a State Trooper or local police officer may issue a civil or criminal citation for a motor vehicle violation if there is a violation of the law.

Q: Does the RMV take information only from the State Police and local law enforcement about misuse of General Registration Plates or can a citizen send a complaint?

A: The RMV encourages members of the public who believe they have witnessed misuse of a General Registration Plate to contact the **RMV Section 5 Division at (857) 368-8030**. You can also send a written complaint to:

Section 5 Division, RMV
P.O. Box 55897
Boston, MA 02205-5897

You may also e-mail the information to the RMV at Section.5.registry@dot.state.ma.us. Please indicate in the text that you are complaining about a General Registration or General Registration Number Plate. The RMV will research the allegations to determine if further action is warranted and may contact you if additional information is necessary. Please identify the plate type and registration number and letter. All complaints received will become public record.

Dealer Plates

Q: Does a person have to have a Dealer License to apply for a Dealer Plate?

A: Yes. Dealer Plates can only be issued to a person who is licensed as a dealer by the city or town in which his or her business is located.

There are three license classes.

- A **Class 1 Motor Vehicle Dealer** must have a written contract with a recognized manufacturer of motor vehicles to sell the manufacturer's new vehicles as the dealer's principal business. The purchase and sale of used motor vehicles must be incidental to the new vehicle business.
- A **Class 2 Dealer** is a person whose principal business is the buying and selling of used vehicles.
- A **Class 3 Dealer** is a person whose principal business is the buying of used motor vehicles for the purpose of remodeling, taking apart or rebuilding and selling the vehicles, or who buys or sells parts of used vehicles, including tires, or assembles used motor vehicle parts. A Class 3 licensee is classified as a "junk" dealer, and the premises may be regulated by state law and city or town ordinances or by-laws.

Q: Are Dealer Plates only issued to dealers of Motor Vehicles?

A: No. Dealer Plates are issued to Motor Vehicle Dealers, Recreational Vehicle Dealers, Recreational Trailer Dealers, Boat Trailer Dealers and Trailer Dealers. Manufacturers are currently issued Dealer Plates to allow the manufacturer's representatives to demonstrate their vehicles at the various dealerships and to potential customers. Motorcycle dealers are issued smaller scale Dealer Plates that contain the lettering M/C Dealer.

Q: What are the special requirements for a Wholesale Dealer (compared to a Retail Dealer)?

A: A Wholesale Dealer (Wholesaler) must operate a licensed business in an office space of at least 100 square feet with a minimum requirement of six hours weekly. A Retail Dealer is required to sell to the public and have business hours of 30 hours or more per week.

A Wholesaler may operate a licensed business from their home with a minimum requirement of six hours weekly, providing there is no access to the domicile from the business office either attached or separate from the domicile. In these instances, the business must have town or city variances that allow for commercial/residential designation and must meet local ordinances and by laws.

Q: I saw a Dealer plate with a W decal. What is this?

A: What you saw was a Dealer Plate that was issued to a Wholesaler. A Wholesaler is a dealer that sells vehicles only to other dealers and not to the public. They are NOT a Retail Dealer.

Q: I saw a Dealer plate with an M decal. What is this?

A: What you saw was a Dealer Plate issued to Manufacturer. It is only issued to a Manufacturer to demonstrate its vehicles to potential customers or various dealerships.

Q: Can a dealer take a vehicle off the lot and use it for "personal use" with a Dealer Plate?

A: Yes. The following described individuals, and only these individuals, may use a vehicle for personal use that is owned by a motor vehicle dealership and has the assigned Dealer Plate attached:

- The dealer
- The spouse of the dealer
- A co-owner of the dealership (a person who holds at least a 40 percent proprietary interest in the dealership)
- The spouse of a co-owner
- A W2 employee who works at least 20 hours per week as a salesperson for the dealer. No other person, including other relatives of the dealer, other dealership employees, or bona fide customers, may operate a dealer owned motor vehicle with a Dealer Plate attached, except for demonstration or sale related purposes.

All vehicles being used for personal use must always display warrantee/window stickers.

Q: Can a dealer put a Dealer Plate on a tow truck or other vehicle used in the day-to-day operations of the dealer's business?

A: No. A dealership cannot use a vehicle with a Dealer Plate attached as equipment utilized in the day-to-day operation of the business, such as a 'tow truck,' 'courtesy bus,' or a 'parts' or 'service vehicle.' Such a vehicle would have to be registered as a "commercial vehicle," or a "livery vehicle" for a courtesy bus designed to carry 15 or fewer passengers. The only exception to this is that the dealer may attach the Dealer Plate to a vehicle owned by the dealer for the purpose of removing snow from the business property. The vehicle may not be used for plowing for compensation.

Q: How can I tell if a vehicle being operated with a Dealer Plate is owned by a dealership?

A: When a vehicle is being operated with a Dealer Plate the customary informational sales stickers must be attached (usually on a rear side window). Such stickers are normally required on passenger vehicles, sport utility vehicles and pickup trucks. A used motor vehicle must have the federally required "Used Car Buyer's Guide"-(FTC sticker informs a potential purchaser of the warranty protection that accompanies the sale of the used vehicle by that dealer); and the state- required "Used Vehicle Warranty Law" sticker- (informs a consumer of their rights under the state warranty law). A new motor vehicle must have the federally required "Manufacturer's Suggested Retail Price" label -(lists the suggested price, options, fuel economy, etc.); and the state-required "New and Lease Car Warranty Law" sticker (provides information on a purchaser's new vehicle warranty rights under state law).

Q: Does a dealer avoid paying registration fees and taxes by using a Dealer Plate?

A: No. Every Massachusetts dealer who is issued a General Registration and Plate must annually pay a fee of \$100 for the Registration Certificate and \$20 for each Registration Plate that is issued. For example, a dealer with 10 plates pays a registration fee of \$300 each year. Motor Vehicle dealers are also subject to an alternative Excise Tax that is assessed by the city or town where the dealership is located. The tax is \$100 for every Dealer Plate that is issued to its licensed dealers. A dealer with 10 Plates will be assessed \$1,000 by the city or town for the privilege of the registration.

Q: I have a small part-time business selling vehicles which is operated out of my home. Buyers approach me over the internet to purchase a vehicle. Can I obtain a Dealer Plate.

A: No. A Dealer Plate will not be issued unless that dealer is principally and substantially engaged in retail sale of motor vehicles; has suitable premises to conduct the business (which must include an office for the maintenance of the records); is separated from any other business not owned by the dealer; has an area to display the motor vehicles offered for sale, and displays a permanently affixed exterior sign to give the general public notice of the name and manner of the business. You are not considered principally and substantially engaged if you are operating on a part-time basis and you are not considered a suitable premises if you are working out of your home.

Q: Who can use the Dealer Plates and what is the proper use of Dealer Plates?

A: A Dealer Plate is used principally for demonstration or sale related purposes. Any employee may use the Dealer Plate during normal business hours, including mechanics, for the following:

- Transporting purchased vehicles to or from auctions, other dealer's lots, and deliveries to buyers
- Removing snow from the business property using a dealer-owned vehicle using the assigned Dealer Plate
- Mechanics test driving a vehicle for repairs being completed

Motorcycle Dealer Plates

Q: Who can get a Motorcycle Dealer's Plate?

A: Motorcycle dealers are required to obtain a license from the city or town where their business is located. They must qualify under the same criteria applicable to a motor

vehicle dealer, since a motorcycle is defined as a motor vehicle. A motorcycle dealer also applies for a Motorcycle Dealer Plate in the same manner as a motor vehicle dealer.

Q: Last week I saw an automobile with a very small license plate attached that had a number (with a letter) and the bottom of the Plate said “ M/C Dealer.” I assume this is a Motorcycle Dealer Plate. Can this type of Plate be attached to a car?

A: Yes. A motorcycle dealer whose inventory includes an automobile or pick-up truck may attach a motorcycle-sized Dealer Plate to the larger vehicle when it is being operated for demonstration or sale-related purposes. Similarly, a Class 1 or Class 2 motor vehicle dealer whose inventory includes a motorcycle may attach a standard-sized Dealer Plate to the motorcycle when it is being operated for demonstration or sale-related purposes.

Repair Plates

Q: Who can get a Repair Plate?

A: Repair Plates are issued to businesses that repair, alter, recondition, equip or tow motor vehicles or trailers for the public and who maintain a place of business as required by law.

Q: Can a repair shop ONLY attach its Repair Plate only to a tow truck?

A: No. A repairer may attach a Repair Plate to a vehicle owned by the repairer, such as a tow truck or parts vehicle. A tow truck or parts vehicle must have an issued Compliance Decal and must be lettered with at least 1 ½ inch lettering. A repairer cannot use a Repair Plate for a demonstration drive on a vehicle it has for sale.

Q: Can a tow truck with a Repair Plate tow a vehicle that is unregistered?

A: Yes. State law and RMV regulations allow a tow truck to tow an unregistered vehicle if the tow truck is properly registered (operating on a valid Repair Plate and the Compliance Decal is properly displayed) and the repairer has insurance coverage **that protects both** the towing vehicle and the vehicle being towed. Note that a tow truck with a “Commercial” registration cannot tow an unregistered vehicle, with wheels on the ground, unless there is a Repair Plate attached to the vehicle being towed. A commercially registered tow truck (Flatbed) MAY tow a vehicle, if the vehicle is fully contained on the bed.

Q: Can I tow a vehicle from another state using my Massachusetts General Registration Plate?

A: Yes. The following New England states are reciprocal with Massachusetts commercial vehicles. We suggest calling the state for your specific travel plans.

CT: Full Reciprocity. For more information, contact Dept of Motor Vehicles, IRP at 860-263-5281.

ME: Full reciprocity. For more information, contact Motor Carrier Services Bureau of Motor Vehicles , IRP Unit at 207-624-9000, ext 52135.

NH: Grants mirror reciprocity. For more information, contact Department of Safety Div of Motor Vehicles, IRP section at 603-227-4110.

RI: Reciprocal with Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Maine. For more information, contact IRP Services Office at 401-946-0090

Q: Does a vehicle owned by a repairer have to have the repair shop's name on it?

A: Yes. Any vehicle owned by a repairer and used primarily in the repairer's business must display the business name and municipality on the vehicle. The identification must be in permanent lettering, at least 1 and 1/2" in size, and be plainly visible from each side or from the front and rear of the vehicle. The lettering must be on every vehicle owned by the repairer and used with the Repair Plate, including tow trucks and service vehicles. Signage is not required on either of the following:

- A motor vehicle purchased by the repairer that is classified as a total loss salvage motor vehicle (see c.90D, §1) and is being transported for purchase, sale, repair or testing and the repairer carries a bill of sale or salvage title for the vehicle
- A motor vehicle purchased by the repairer and being operated within 10 days of purchase and the operator has a bill of sale, seller's assigned Certificate of Title or the receipt for the repairer's Application for a Certificate of Title. The repairer owned vehicle must also display the required Compliance Decal.

Q: Can a repairer attach its Repair Plate to a customer's vehicle?

A: Yes. A repairer can use its Repair Plate on a customer's vehicle for the purpose of repairing, altering, equipping or reconditioning the vehicle or transportation incidental thereto, but the repairer cannot use the customer's vehicle for commuting or for the repairer's personal use. Only the repairer (or an agent of the repairer) may operate the customer's vehicle with the Repair Plate attached. The repairer may **not** permit the customer to operate the customer's own vehicle with the Repair Plate.

Q: Can a vehicle owned by a repairer and operated with a Repair Plate be used for personal use by the repairer?

A: A repairer may only use a vehicle with a "repair" plate attached for personal use when the vehicle is all of the following:

- Owned by the repairer
- Primarily used in the repairer's business

- Displays the valid Compliance Decal
- Properly displays the repairer's name and the municipality of the repair shop

Use of the vehicle for commercial use unrelated to the repairer's business is not authorized.

Q: Can a repairer operate a snowplow with the Repair Plate attached?

A: Yes, but only if the vehicle is: 1) owned by the repairer; 2) used **primarily** in the repairer's business; 3) displays the valid Compliance Decal; 4) properly displays the name and municipality of the repair shop; and 5) the use is limited to removing snow from the business property and the repairer is **not** receiving compensation for plowing.

Q: Does a repairer avoid paying registration fees and taxes by using a Repair Plate?

A: No. Like other Section 5 registrants, a repairer must pay an annual fee of \$100 for the Registration Certificate and \$20 for each Repair Plate. A repairer is also subject to the Excise Tax of \$25 per thousand dollars of valuation for each vehicle it owns and must pay a sales tax when purchasing the vehicle and a Title Fee upon registration. The RMV will not issue a Repair Plate until the repairer has provided satisfactory evidence that it (or the company it is leasing the vehicle from) has paid the 6.25% sales tax and the \$75 Title Fee for all the vehicles it owns which will be operated on the Repair Plate. The RMV will then issue a Compliance Decal for each separate vehicle. The decal identifies each vehicle by its Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) and the repairer's General Registration Number, and the decal contains a serial number. This decal must be affixed to a window of the vehicle behind the driver and facing outward. If there is no such window the Decal must be placed on the rear of the vehicle as close to the registration plate as possible.

Compliance with the decal requirement is a condition of registration and a vehicle lacking the required decal will be deemed unregistered, in violation of [Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 90, Section 9](#).

Owner-Contractor Plates

Q: Who can get an Owner-Contractor Plate?

A: There are several types of businesses that can be issued an Owner-Contractor Plate:

An Owner-Contractor Plate can be issued to a business that owns a fleet of at least 10 or more motor vehicles, trailers, mobile construction cranes or combinations of any of these. To qualify the applicant must have at least one piece of "special mobile equipment" (a vehicle principally designed to conduct excavations or lift building materials at public or private construction sites, is operated on a way for the sole purpose of getting to and from the site and has a gross vehicle weight of at least 12,000 lbs.). The Owner-Contractor must maintain facilities for the repair, alteration or equipping of the vehicles or equipment it owns. The facilities must be in a permanent

building capable of admitting most of the registrant's vehicles and it must contain the tools and equipment necessary to make needed repairs and alterations. The business must be separate from any business not owned by the registrant.

An Owner-Contractor Plate can be issued to a business that leases for hire so called "storage" or "mobile office" trailers. The business must have at least ten trailers.

An Owner-Contractor Plate can also be issued to a business that rents or leases motor vehicles or trailers to the general public. The business must own at least 20 such vehicles. Only the owner or owner's agent may operate the vehicles with the Owner-Contractor Plate attached, and only for repair, alteration, maintenance, delivery, disposal or retrieval of the vehicle.

An Owner-Contractor Plate may be issued to a business that engages in the short-term renting or leasing of specialized motor vehicles or trailers to the general public, that are designed for use in construction, if the business owns at least 20 specialized motor vehicles or trailers.

Note: An Owner-Contractor registration plate is appropriate for a backhoe, or other rubber-tired piece of "special mobile equipment" that does not actually perform any work on a public way and the vehicle is only used at a closed construction site. That is why use of the plate is limited for the sole purpose of transporting the vehicle to or from a public or private construction site. However, a commercial registration plate is required for the same type of vehicle if the construction site itself is a public way.

Q: Can an Owner-Contractor attach the Owner-Contractor Plate to any vehicle it owns?

A: No. The Owner-Contractor Plate cannot be attached to a vehicle that is designed to carry passengers or any load on a public way. For example, pick-up trucks and dump trucks cannot be used with the Owner-Contractor Plate. However, the Owner-Contractor plate can be used on Special Mobile Equipment over 12,000 lbs, provided it displays a valid Compliance Decal.

Q: Can an Owner-Contractor plow snow in a vehicle operated with the Owner-Contractor Plate?

A: Yes. An Owner-Contractor may plow snow on a public way in a vehicle operated with the Owner-Contractor plate, **but only if** the vehicle is "special mobile equipment." As described earlier, special mobile equipment is a vehicle principally designed to conduct excavations or lift building materials at public or private construction sites and has a gross vehicle weight of at least 12, 000 lbs. A road grader or rubber-tired bucket loader meeting the weight requirement may be used, **but not a dump truck.**

Q: Does an Owner-Contractor avoid paying registration fees and taxes by using an Owner-Contractor Plate?

A: No. Like other Section 5 registrants, an Owner-Contractor must pay an annual fee of \$100 for the Registration Certificate and \$20 for each Owner-Contractor Plate. An Owner-Contractor is also subject to the Excise Tax of \$25 per thousand dollars of valuation for each vehicle it owns and must pay a 6.25% sales tax when purchasing the vehicle and pay a \$75 Title Fee upon registration. The RMV will not issue an Owner-Contractor Plate until the Owner-Contractor has provided satisfactory evidence that it (or the company it is leasing the vehicle from) has paid the sales tax and title fee for each vehicle it owns which will be operated with the Owner-Contractor Plate. The RMV will then issue a Compliance Decal for each separate vehicle. The decal identifies each vehicle by its Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) and the assigned General Registration Number, and the decal contains a serial number. This decal must be affixed to a window of the vehicle behind the driver and facing the outside. If there is no such window the Decal must be placed on the rear of the vehicle as close to the registration plate as possible.

Compliance with the decal requirement is a condition of registration and a vehicle lacking the required decal will be deemed unregistered, in violation of [Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 90, Section 9](#).

Farm Plates

Q: I have a very large backyard and plant tomatoes and carrots every year in my garden. Can I get Farm Plates?

A: Probably not. To obtain a Farm Plate an applicant must be substantially engaged in the occupation of farming for the public, and not for personal consumption, as defined in Chapter 90, §1 or the growing and harvesting of forest products or incidental lumbering operations, must be a Massachusetts resident or corporation and must hold any license or permit required for their business by law. All new applicants for Farm Plates must have a minimum of five acres for a farm or 10 acres for forest products and lumbering operations. There are also income producing requirements.

Q: Are there farm vehicle requirements to obtain a Farm Plate?

A: Yes. A farmer must own a fleet of two or more motor vehicles or trailers principally used and dedicated to conducting the farming activity, **excluding passenger vehicles**. The farmer's personal passenger vehicle cannot be operated with a Farm Plate.

Q: Can a vehicle owned by a farmer and operated with a Farm Plate be used for personal use by the farmer?

A: A "Farm" plate may only be attached to a motor vehicle or trailer if the vehicle is all of the following:

- Owned by the farmer
- Principally used and dedicated to farming activity

- Displays the valid Compliance Decal
- Not a passenger vehicle

If the vehicle meets these criteria, then personal use of the vehicle is acceptable, except that a commercial use unrelated to the farming activity is not authorized.

Q: Does a farmer avoid paying registration fees and taxes by using a Farm Plate?

A: No. Like other Section 5 registrants, a farmer must pay an annual fee of \$100 for the Registration Certificate and \$20 for each Farm Plate. State law **does** allow a farmer to obtain an exemption from the Excise Tax by filing an application for exemption with the local tax assessor. Farmers must pay a 6.25% sales tax when purchasing a vehicle and pay a \$75 Title Fee upon registration. When the farmer provides evidence that the sales tax and Title Fee has been paid, the RMV will issue a Compliance Decal for each separate vehicle. The decal identifies each vehicle by its Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) and the farmer's assigned General Registration Number and the decal contains a serial number. This decal must be affixed to a window of the vehicle behind the driver and facing the outside. If there is no such window the Decal must be placed on the rear of the vehicle as close to the registration plate as possible.

Compliance with the decal requirement is a condition of registration and a vehicle lacking the required decal will be deemed unregistered, in violation of [Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 90, Section 9](#).

Certain pieces of equipment called "implements of husbandry" are exempt from the sales tax and Title Fee and Compliance Decal requirements. These are vehicles which are designed and adapted primarily for agricultural, horticultural or livestock raising operations or for lifting or carrying an implement of husbandry. (Examples are a hay wagon, a baler and a manure spreader).

Transporter Plates

Q: What is a transporter?

A: A transporter is someone principally and substantially engaged in the business of transporting or delivering vehicles not owned by the transporter. This can include someone transporting motor vehicles (under their own power) or trailers under a contract. A transporter for hire must obtain a license from the Department of Telecommunications and Energy.

Q: Can someone other than a transporter for hire obtain a Transporter plate?

A: Yes. Transporter Plates are issued to motor vehicle finance companies and other financial entities, such as banks, who are licensed in the financing of vehicles or vehicle insurance companies whose employees or agents may seize the vehicles for non-payment.