

West's Tennessee Code Annotated
Title 55. Motor and Other Vehicles (Refs & Annos)
Chapter 4. Registration and Licensing of Motor Vehicles (Refs & Annos)
Part 1. General Provisions

T. C. A. § 55-4-103

§ 55-4-103. Design; contents; replacement

Effective: May 18, 2017

[Currentness](#)

(a) The department shall likewise furnish to the county clerks of the various counties of the state all registration plates of all types that may be required by the county clerks in the exercise of the duties in subdivision (b)(1) imposed upon them.

(b)(1) Every registration plate shall have displayed upon it, in addition to a registration number, the year in which it expires and the abbreviation of the word, "Tennessee," and if the registration plate is issued for any type of vehicle other than a privately owned passenger vehicle not operated for hire, some symbol, or word, indicating the type vehicle for which the plate was originally issued. Registration plates shall bear individual distinctive alphanumeric characters not to exceed a combination of seven (7) as determined by the commissioner. To promote the state's official travel planning website, all registration plates which are created after July 1, 2010, other than registration plates issued under part 2 or part 3 of this chapter, shall also include the language "www.tnvacation.com" or the domain name of any subsequent official website used by the department of tourist development.

(2) Registration plates shall be designed in such a manner as determined by the commissioner as will permit the display of validation or revalidation tabs, stickers, or other devices as provided in [§ 55-4-104\(e\)](#), and registration plates shall also be designed in such a manner as determined by the commissioner as will permit thereon, the display of county and/or municipal wheel tax tabs, stickers, or other devices evidencing payment of wheel or road taxes enacted by the respective county and/or municipality of Tennessee, if such local government, pursuant to [§ 5-8-102\(d\)\(3\)](#), requires the issuance, display and placement of such tabs, stickers, or other devices for wheel or road taxes on the registration plate.

(3) Wheel tax records shall be maintained by the county clerk for the same period of time as registration records prior to disposition.

(4) Registration plates shall also be designed in such a manner to require the display of tabs, stickers or devices on plates to be issued for a private passenger vehicle, which tabs, stickers or devices shall specify the name of the county of issue. The characters of the name of the county shall in no event be smaller than the characters of the words "Volunteer State" which now appear on registration plates. The area for the display of the county shall be below and parallel to the alpha-numerical legend as provided in subdivision (b)(1). Tabs, stickers or devices on plates shall be issued at the time of the issuance of the registration plates as required by this chapter and subsection (i) and displayed on the registration plates in a manner to be determined by the commissioner.

(c) Registration plate or plates and the required numerals thereon, except the year number for which issued, shall be of sufficient size to be readable from a distance of one hundred feet (100') during daylight.

(d) This section shall apply to and include any mobile home or house trailer.

(e) The requirement in subdivision (b)(1) for displaying the year of issue on a plate may be removed with respect to those plates issued under a registration which does not require annual renewal.

(f)(1) To promote highway safety and increase visibility and legibility on registration plates, the plates shall be fully reflectorized. The commissioner has the authority to establish specifications covering reflectorization.

(2) In addition to the fee imposed in subdivision (f)(3) and in addition to all other motor vehicle registration fees prescribed by law, there shall be paid to the department the additional fee of seventy-five cents (75¢) at the time of the issuance of registration plates or the renewal thereof.

(3) In addition to all other motor vehicle registration fees prescribed by law, there shall be paid to the department the additional sum of one dollar (\$1.00) at the time of the issuance of registration plates or the renewal thereof.

(g) When any plate becomes so mutilated or effaced as to no longer meet the requirements of the law, the holder shall apply to the department for suitable replacement. The commissioner is authorized to promulgate rules and regulations as may be necessary to provide for the replacement of lost or destroyed plates and to collect a fee of ten dollars (\$10.00) for each application.

(h) Commencing January 1, 2006, and not later than each eighth anniversary thereafter, the commissioner shall cause to be reissued a new registration plate of a design as directed by the commissioner consistent with the terms, conditions and provisions of this section and this chapter. New registration plates shall not be issued prior to January 1, 2006; provided, however, that the issue of the new registration plates on January 1, 2006, and any subsequent issuance shall be deferred to a later January 1 if funds for the reissue of the registration plates are not appropriated specifically in the general appropriations act.

(i) County residents who purchase a vehicle out of their county of residence shall receive a county name strip from the county clerk of their county of residence upon proof of proper registration and payment of any county wheel tax or other applicable county fees.

(j) After January 1, 2009, every motor vehicle owner who replaces the registration plate on the owner's motor vehicle may deposit the old, outdated or expired registration plate with the department of revenue or its agents in a manner determined by the commissioner pursuant to this subsection (j). The department of revenue shall create a program that promotes the recycling of used or outdated registration plates for the metal content in the plates. The program shall require each county facility where registration plates are issued to have a site for placing a bin or other container to collect used, outdated or expired registration plates for recycling. Each renewal notice of registration shall contain information regarding any such recycling program for registration plates. The commissioner may enter into contractual agreements with nonprofit organizations for the collection, disposal and recycling of used, expired or outdated registration plates, including the placement and maintenance of recycling bins or containers at county facilities where registration plates are issued, and the transportation of the registration plates to recycling facilities. Notwithstanding any provision of this subsection (j) to the contrary, the commissioner shall not be required

to enter into an agreement or create a program pursuant to this subsection (j) that would require the department of revenue to incur, pay, or otherwise assume responsibility for the payment of, expenses associated with the collection, disposal or recycling of used, expired or outdated registration plates. However, contractual agreements may allow nonprofit organizations to retain proceeds from the collection, disposal and recycling as an incentive to participation. The county mayor shall designate a location on county property, either inside or outside of any county facility where registration plates are issued, for the placement of recycling bins or containers. Other than providing a location for a bin or container, the county shall have no responsibility for implementation of the recycling program or liability for its operation. If a contractor is not maintaining recycling facilities in a satisfactory manner on county property, the county mayor may notify the commissioner of revenue. The commissioner shall take appropriate steps to ensure that the contractor remedies the problem or terminate the agreement and find a suitable replacement.

(k)(1) An owner or lessee of a motor vehicle who has been issued, or is entitled under this chapter to be issued, a registration plate pursuant to this section, may elect in the alternative for the issuance of a registration plate that is designed in a manner to have engraved or embossed on it the language “In God We Trust” as provided in subdivision (k)(2).

(2) Beginning July 1, 2017, the commissioner shall cause to be issued registration plates issued or reissued pursuant to this section that display the language “In God We Trust” if requested pursuant to subdivision (k)(1).

(3) The redesign of any registration plates with the language provided for in subdivision (k)(2) shall only be effectuated upon the existing inventory of the registration plates issued pursuant to this section without such language being utilized by the department.

Credits

1951 Pub.Acts, c. 70, § 64; impl. am. by 1959 Pub.Acts, c. 9, § 14; 1963 Pub.Acts, c. 143, § 6; 1967 Pub.Acts, c. 122, § 2; 1969 Pub.Acts, c. 334, § 1; 1970 Pub.Acts, c. 499, § 1; 1971 Pub.Acts, c. 12, § 1; 1972 Pub.Acts, c. 742, § 1; 1974 Pub.Acts, c. 668, § 1; 1975 Pub.Acts, c. 98, § 1; 1975 Pub.Acts, c. 357, § 1; 1977 Pub.Acts, c. 39, § 1; impl. am. by 1978 Pub.Acts, c. 934, §§ 22, 36; 1986 Pub.Acts, c. 816, §§ 1 to 4; 1987 Pub.Acts, c. 321, § 1; 1988 Pub.Acts, c. 710, § 1; 1988 Pub.Acts, c. 971, § 1; 1990 Pub.Acts, c. 716, § 1; 1991 Pub.Acts, c. 90, § 1; 1991 Pub.Acts, c. 405, § 1; 1996 Pub.Acts, c. 687, § 3, eff. March 29, 1996; 1997 Pub.Acts, c. 251, § 1, eff. May 22, 1997; 1997 Pub.Acts, c. 538, § 1, eff. June 19, 1997; 2003 Pub.Acts, c. 355, § 17, eff. June 16, 2003; 2004 Pub.Acts, c. 481, §§ 1 to 3, eff. April 8, 2004; 2008 Pub.Acts, c. 605, § 1, eff. July 1, 2008; 2009 Pub.Acts, c. 530, § 113, eff. June 25, 2009; 2010 Pub.Acts, c. 718, § 1, eff. July 1, 2010; 2012 Pub.Acts, c. 908, § 1, eff. May 10, 2012; 2013 Pub.Acts, c. 183, § 1, eff. July 1, 2013; 2017 Pub.Acts, c. 429, § 1, eff. May 18, 2017.

Formerly Williams' Code, § 5538.164; § 59-403.

T. C. A. § 55-4-103, TN ST § 55-4-103

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