



Factsheet **49**

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Vehicle licensing

Most vehicles must have a vehicle licence before you can use them on public roads. You pay a fee for the licence and you get a vehicle licence label to display on the vehicle.

Registration and licensing are different

Vehicle registration (plates)

Vehicle registration is paying a one-off fee to add a vehicle's details to the Motor Vehicle Register. When it's added to the register, we issue number plates for it.

This usually only happens once for most vehicles, when they've arrived in New Zealand and are first going to be used on the road.

See *Vehicle registration* (Factsheet 9) for more information on registration. Go to www.nzta.govt.nz/vehicle-number-plates for more information on number plates.

Vehicle licensing (label)

Vehicle licensing is paying a regular fee so that your vehicle is allowed to use the road. When you pay the fee, you get a licence label showing the licence expiry date. You must display the label on the vehicle.

Your vehicle licence is often referred to as your rego, but it's not the same thing as registration.

The registered person's responsibilities

When you let us know you've bought a vehicle, we record you as the registered person in the Motor Vehicle Register. That's the person responsible for the vehicle, but isn't the same as legal ownership.

Your vehicle licensing responsibilities

As the registered person, you're responsible for making sure your vehicle is licensed at all times while using the road, or has an exemption from licensing.

If your vehicle has an exemption, you must not use it on the road.

Your other responsibilities

This factsheet only covers your vehicle licensing responsibilities. However, there are other important responsibilities that you also need to be aware of.

www.nzta.govt.nz/registered-person-responsibilities

Continuous vehicle licensing

Most vehicles must be licensed continuously. That means there can't be any days when your vehicle isn't licensed, unless you officially take it off the road.

Vehicle licences expire

Vehicle licences expire, so as the registered person, you need to make sure you renew yours regularly.

Go to www.nzta.govt.nz/check-expiry-dates to check the licence, exemption and inspection expiry dates for your vehicle, anytime.

You can also check the expiry date on your current licence label.

Vehicle licensing fees

Licensing fees are different for different kinds of vehicles. Check online for a list of the most common licensing fees.

www.nzta.govt.nz/vehicle-licensing-fees

How to update the registered person's name

You need to update your name on the Motor Vehicle Register if it changes (for example, if you get married, legally change your name or similar). You need to have evidence showing your name change, like a driver licence, passport or other official documentation.

If you need to change your name, please call us on 0800 108 809 for advice on how to change it and what evidence you need.

If you need to put the vehicle into someone else's name (for example, if you sell it, or gift it to a family member) you can go to www.nzta.govt.nz/sold-vehicle and let us know you've sold the vehicle.

How to renew your vehicle licence

You must have a current WoF or CoF

Your vehicle must have a current warrant of fitness (WoF) or certificate of fitness (CoF) before you can get a licence label or use the vehicle on the road.

Step 1: Receive a reminder

We'll send you a reminder in the post or by email six weeks before your vehicle licence is due to expire. It lets you know the licensing fees and your options.

Save paper - switch to email

Add your email address at www.nzta.govt.nz/my-details and we'll send your next reminder by email instead of post.

You may also receive some of our other reminders by email.

Step 2: Renew online at www.nzta.govt.nz/rego

You'll need:

- your reminder number **or** your plate number
- your credit/debit card or internet banking details.

Step 3: Receive your new licence label

It should arrive in the post within ten working days.

If you've renewed online and your licence label hasn't arrived within ten working days, please call us on 0800 108 809.

If online isn't an option for you

You can visit one of our agents instead:
www.nzta.govt.nz/vehicle-agents

If you've run out of time and can't wait ten working days for your label, renew at an agent instead of going online. The agent will give you your label straight away.

Use the reminder you received from us, or fill out an *Application to license motor vehicle* (MR1B) form at the agent.

You must display your licence label

When you pay the licensing fee, you'll get a label that shows the date your licence expires. You must display the label on the left-hand side of your vehicle's windscreen, or near your number plate (for trailers or motorcycles).

If your label is lost or stolen

You need to get a replacement label. You can get a new label:

- **straight away** by going to an agent, filling out an *Application for replacement licence label* (MR6) form and paying a fee
- **sent to you in the mail** by calling us on 0800 108 809 and paying over the phone.

If you don't renew in time

If your licence is due to expire and you don't renew in time, you'll be breaking the law under the Land Transport Act 1998.

If your vehicle stays unlicensed for 12 months, we'll cancel the vehicle's registration, which means you won't be able to legally drive it on the road anymore.

You'll still be responsible for any outstanding licensing fees.

We'll send you a warning notice before we cancel the registration.

If you don't receive a reminder

Even if you don't receive a reminder, you're still responsible for keeping your vehicle licensed, and paying the licensing fees.

Remember, you can check your expiry date on your current licence label or online anytime.

www.nzta.govt.nz/check-expiry-dates

Make sure your details are up to date

As the registered person, you need to let us know as soon as your details change.

You can go online to www.nzta.govt.nz/online-services to:

- update your address
- update or add your email address
- let us know if you've recently bought or sold a vehicle.

This helps us make sure we're sending reminders to the right person at the right address.

Pay your licensing fees

If your licence has expired and you haven't received a reminder, don't wait! Go online to www.nzta.govt.nz/rego (you don't need to enter a reminder number if you haven't received one).

Or, fill in an *Application to license motor vehicle* (MR1B) form at one of our agents.

Fines for unlicensed vehicles

Please be aware that the police and local authorities fine registered people caught using unlicensed vehicles on the road.

You could be fined \$200 for not displaying a current licence label on your vehicle. You could also be fined another \$200 for having an unlicensed vehicle on the road.

Not using the vehicle on the road

If you won't be using the vehicle on the road for at least three months in a row, you can (and should) apply for an exemption from licensing. You can also have someone else apply on your behalf.

When your vehicle goes on exemption, it means it doesn't have to be licensed for the period of time that the exemption lasts.

Some people call this putting your rego on hold.

How to get an exemption

You can apply online at www.nzta.govt.nz/exempt

You'll need your:

- New Zealand driver licence
- plate number
- credit/debit card or internet banking details.

You won't pay an administration fee when you apply online.

If online isn't an option for you, you can fill out a *Put your vehicle licence (rego) on hold* (MR24) form at one of our agents.

If you have any licensing fees owing, you'll have to pay them before we can process the exemption.

When to apply for an exemption

You must apply in advance. It will take effect from when your current licence (or existing exemption) expires.

If the vehicle isn't licensed, the exemption will start from the application date.

When the exemption expires, you'll need to either license the vehicle or apply for another exemption.

How long you can have an exemption

There's a maximum of 12 months for an exemption period, but you can apply for another exemption when your current exemption is due to expire soon.

There's a minimum of three months for an exemption period.

If you license your vehicle within the first three months of your exemption period, the licence will start from the expiry date of the previous licence/exemption, or when the vehicle was put into your name (whichever is the most recent).

Choosing a different licence expiry date

You can choose a different licence expiry date by filling in an *Application to change licence expiry date* (MR27) form at one of our agents. The agent will let you know your options and the fee.

Licence refunds

We can't refund the licence fee, unless you cancel the vehicle's registration and hand in the number plates.

You should only cancel the vehicle's registration if you're going to take the vehicle off the road permanently. See the *Your vehicle will be permanently off the road* section of this factsheet for more information.

Vehicles that don't have to be licensed

All vehicles must be licensed when using the road.

However, these types of vehicles don't have to be licensed continuously:

- vehicles that are more than 40 years old
- agricultural machinery, tractors and mobile machines
- exempt class EA and EB vehicles
- trailers and trailer-type caravans with a gross laden weight not more than 3500kg
- all-terrain vehicles (ATVs).

That means there can be a gap between licence periods when the vehicle isn't licensed (but they shouldn't use the road if they're not licensed).

They also don't have to have an exemption while they're off the road. However, you should apply for an exemption if you're not going to use them on the road for more than two years.

If they stay unlicensed for more than two years and they don't have an exemption, we'll cancel the vehicle's registration. That means it can't go back on the road.

Defences for driving an unlicensed vehicle

In the two situations that follow, you'll have a defence if you get a ticket for using an unlicensed vehicle.

A defence is different to an exemption. For a defence, it's your responsibility to prove that you're entitled to use an unlicensed vehicle in that situation.

Taking a vehicle for inspection, servicing and repairs

Your vehicle doesn't have to have a current licence if you're driving it on the road only to get a warrant of fitness (WoF), certificate of fitness (CoF), servicing or repairs.

You must be taking it directly to an appropriate place where you'll be getting those services.

The vehicle must still be safe to be used on the road, even if it needs repairs in order to pass an inspection.

Using a vehicle to cross the road

You can also drive an unlicensed vehicle on the road only to cross the road.

Crossing the road doesn't mean you can drive down the road for any distance. You must be crossing in a direct line from one side of the road to the other.

You've bought a vehicle without a licence

You'll only need to pay from the date you bought the vehicle, not the date the licence was due. The seller is responsible for the unpaid fees before you bought the vehicle.

You've sold a vehicle without a licence

You're responsible for any licensing fees owing up to the date you sold or disposed of the vehicle. We use a debt collection agency to recover outstanding licence fees.

Your vehicle has been stolen

You need to report the vehicle as stolen to the police first, then you can contact us about your licensing fees.

If its licence has expired, you won't need to pay from the date it was stolen, as long as you contact us.

If your vehicle is found, you'll only need to pay licensing fees from the date it was returned to you.

If your vehicle has been stolen and is licensed, please call us on 0800 108 809 for advice.

Your vehicle will be permanently off the road

You'll need to cancel its registration by filling in an *Application to cancel registration* (MR15) form at one of our plate agents (www.nzta.govt.nz/vehicle-agents). You should hand in the number plates at the same time as the MR15 form.

If you don't have plates to hand in, you need to provide a reason why (and you may need to provide supporting evidence).

You want to put your vehicle back on the road

If your vehicle's registration has been cancelled, but it will be used on a public road at a later date, you need to follow these steps first:

- inspection
- certification
- registration
- licensing
- getting number plates and labels.

See *Vehicle registration* (Factsheet 9) for more information.



This factsheet is a general guide only. It doesn't replace legal advice, and your exact requirements will depend on current legislation.

Make sure you have the most up-to-date version of this factsheet by checking www.nzta.govt.nz/factsheets

➔ www.nzta.govt.nz

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