

Online Desk Reference Guide for U.S. Government License Plates

Guiding Documents

1. The Federal Management Regulation for vehicle identification, licence plates, and exemptions can be found at [FMR 102-34.85 through FMR 102-34.195](#)
2. A list of assigned agency license plate prefixes is found in the appendix to [FMR Bulletin B-11 "U.S. Government License Plate Codes"](#)
3. The General Services Administration (GSA) Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with UNICOR for the license plate program. Requests for copies of the MOU can be sent to vehicle.policy@gsa.gov.

License Plate Design

By statute, Federal vehicles are required to be conspicuously identified by displaying "For Official Use Only," "U.S. Government," and the agency owning the vehicle. The U.S. Government license plate is designed to comply with this requirement and is the preferable way to identify and display the required information on the vehicle.

U.S. Government license plates are issued in 2 sizes:

1. Regular sized plate for sedans, trucks, and most trailers
2. Smaller motorcycle sized plate for motorcycles, small trailers

U.S. Government License Plates are issued as:

1. 2-plate pair (an A plate and a B plate) for sedans and trucks
2. Single plate for trailers and motorcycles (the A-plate only).

Current Style License Plates:

All plates have an expiration date and expire in 8 years.



Current A and B plate license plate design (Oct 2014)

U.S. Government license plates for agency-owned vehicles begin with the agency prefix (see FMR Bulletin B-11), and contain an agency name or logo in the lower left corner. License plates not conforming with this design are obsolete and should be replaced and sent to UNICOR for destruction as soon as possible.

All license plate designs must be approved by the GSA, Office of Government-Wide Policy and the agency fleet manager before UNICOR adds them to the license plate store.

The license plate design approving official (GSA, Office of Government-Wide Policy) should take care to ensure that the license plate font size is large enough to be reasonably legible given the space available on the plate.

Trailer License Plates:

Trailer license plates end with the letter “T”



Typical Trailer plate design ending in “T”

Motorcycle-size License Plates:

Motorcycle plates end with the letter “M”



Motorcycle plate design ending in “M”

Motorcycle-size plates can be used on any small vehicle or trailer used on public roads where a license plate is required and a full sized plate would be too large. (For example, small

ATV, snowmobile, or boat trailers). Where a license plate is not required, use “Off Road Identification Plates”.

License Plate Display

License plates are displayed in accordance with FMR 102-34.100 and FMR 102-34.110 through 150. **Federal sedans and trucks must display 2 U.S. Government license plates even if the State in which the vehicle is operating only requires one plate.** Note that trailers and motorcycles are only required to display one license plate on the rear of the vehicle.

Purchasing License Plates

License Plates are purchased from UNICOR through an online store using an account set up by your agency for that purpose.

Each agency must enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with UNICOR designating who can purchase plates, how they will be paid for, how they will be shipped, and who (the agency or UNICOR) will number the plates. When an agency numbers their own plates, they are responsible in case a plate is ordered that duplicates an existing number. For that reason, most agencies agree to UNICOR numbering.

To set up an account and gain access to the online license plate store, please contact Jim Gill of UNICOR at Jim.Gill@usdoj.gov.

Registration of License Plates

U.S. Government license plates must be registered in the [Federal Motor Vehicle Registration System](#) (FMVRS) per FMR 102-34.120. Agencies are responsible for the accuracy of the vehicle and license plate data in FMVRS for the lifecycle of the vehicle and license plates. At a minimum, please keep up to date the current status of each plate the current point of contact information.

Remember, once plates are shipped, the receipt of license plate shipments must be acknowledged by the agency to demonstrate that the shipment arrived and is complete. Acknowledgement is accomplished by updating the status of license plates to “RC” - “Received by Agency” as soon as possible after receipt. If the status is not changed to “RC” within 30 days of the shipment date, the status automatically changes to “MS - Missing” status.

When a plate is physically attached to a vehicle, the FMVRS license plate record and the vehicle record must be combined to create a complete registration record. The FMVRS license plate status will then show that the plate(s) has been “AT - Attached to Vehicle”.

FMVRS records are never deleted. Instead, ensure that the correct status is used for excess plate records (such as PD “Pending Destruction” or RT “Returned to UNICOR”) Note: Updating the status of FMVRS records is an agency responsibility. GSA will only update records for extraordinary situations. If you believe you have an extraordinary situation, your request for assistance must come from your Agency / Bureau Fleet Manager. The Agency Fleet Manager is required to validate the request prior to sending the request to GSA.

Vehicle Identification Card

The U.S. Government Vehicle Identification card is NOT an actual registration card. It is an identification card that states that the Federal license plates and Motor Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) are registered in FMVRS, and provides vehicle, license plate, and insurance information that may be useful if stopped by law enforcement.

Vehicle Identification Cards are downloaded from within FMVRS. To download the Vehicle Identification Card, a new style license plate with a valid expiration date must be loaded properly in FMVRS. Printing off an Identification card is not mandatory. Your agency may print and use motor vehicle identification cards as needed.

Returning License Plates

U.S. Government License plates (all types and sizes) - once “attached” to a vehicle - can not be reused and must be returned to UNICOR for destruction when the vehicle is disposed of.

U.S. Government license plates that are expired, removed, replaced, damaged or unneeded must be returned to UNICOR for destruction. There is no charge for the return shipment of excess license plates. The SOP for license plate return is located at the bottom of the main menu on the FMVRS webpage. You may also request a copy of the license plate return SOP at Vehicle.Policy@GSA.Gov. UNICOR will provide a certificate of destruction for returned plates.

Local destruction of U.S. Government license plates is not permitted. All excess plates must be returned to UNICOR per SOP instructions found on the main menu of FMVRS. U.S. Government license plates that are locally destroyed will be listed as “missing” in FMVRS forever because the actual disposition of the plate can not be proved and its potential to be used to harm cannot be ruled out.

Note: Only return U.S Government license plates and the SOP inventory sheet to UNICOR. DO NOT include fleet cards or fuel cards with the shipment. DO NOT send State issued license plates to UNICOR for destruction.

Lost or Stolen License Plates

[FMR 102.34-135](#) contains a list of actions that must be taken when a license plate is lost or stolen. For *U.S. Government license plates*, agencies should:

- Report to your local security office (or equivalent);
- Report to your local police department;
- Report to GSA Fleet when a GSA Fleet leased motor vehicle is involved; and
- Update the status of the license plates in the Federal Government Motor Vehicle Registration System.

For *District of Columbia or State license plates*, agencies should:

- Report to your local security office (or equivalent); and
- Report to either the District of Columbia Department of Transportation, or the State Department of Motor Vehicles, as appropriate.

We also recommend that agencies report lost or stolen plates to the Federal Protective Service via the Service's National Toll Free Number at 1-877-437-7411.

Note: Missing U.S. Government license plates pose a very serious security concern. It is important that a missing licence plate has its FMVRS status changed to "missing" as soon as it is noticed. Do not wait until after a search is made to locate it. Change the status immediately. If the plate is used by unauthorized persons and spotted by law enforcement, law enforcement will receive a message through NLETS that the plate is missing and to approach with caution. Your quick action to change the missing plate's status to "missing" in FMVRS is critically important. If the license plate is later found and reattached to the vehicle, the status can be changed back to "attached". There is no penalty for listing a plate as missing and it just might help avoid a tragedy. (Thank you in advance! Karl)

Release of License Plate or Registration Information to Outside Sources

FMVRS Registration information is ONLY released through the [National Law Enforcement Telecommunications System \(NLETS\)](#). Several checks and balances are built into GSA's responses to NLETS inquiries designed to protect Federal law enforcement agents and their missions. These safeguards are lost if providing FMVRS data outside of NLETS. Information is never provided through email or over the phone. Agencies and their authorized users have full access to their own data and can run reports as needed within the FMVRS system.

In addition, Federal license plate numbers are never verified as "in use" or even verified as a license plate not currently in use and photos of license plate designs are never provided to outside inquiries (for example: movie studios asking for "unused" numbers to place on license plate props). Knowing which numbers are "valid" or not could aid criminals in their activities. Providing a license plate number or confirming a license plate number could shift liability to the Government in the event the plate is used in a crime.

Vehicle Transfers

Normally, once “attached” to a vehicle, the license plate stays with that vehicle until the vehicle is disposed of by the owning agency. However, sometimes, agencies elect to transfer vehicles to new agencies or transfer vehicles between activities and/or locations within the same agency.

Vehicle Transfers to a New Agency

The FMVRS Users Guide explains how to transfer a vehicle from one agency to a new agency within the FMVRS environment (Chapter 3.1.4, Transferring a Vehicle). The original license plates attached to the vehicle that is being transferred to a new agency must be disassociated from that vehicle within the FMVRS, have their status updated within the FMVRS as “Pending Destruction” (PD) or returned to UNICOR for destruction (RT). The actual license plates should be removed from the vehicle and returned to UNICOR following the SOP (found on the FMVRS main menu page). License plates The new agency will be responsible for purchasing license plates for the transferred vehicle and updating FMVRS to show the new agency, the new POC, and the new license plate number.

Vehicle Transfers within the Same Agency

When a vehicle is transferred within the same agency (from one bureau to another, or from one location to another), internal agency policy should determine if the tags remain with the vehicle or should be replaced.

Some agencies use license plates with assigned number ranges or suffix letters to designate specific bureaus or locations. Thus, agency fleet managers within those agencies may require tag replacement to align the transferred vehicle to its new bureau or location.

Off-Road Identification Plates

Off-road identification plates ARE NOT license plates. They are simply identification plates intended to number equipment. They are designed to be bright and obvious so they can never be confused with a U.S. Government license plate. Typical items that display off-road plates are fork lifts, ATVs, construction equipment, and agricultural equipment.

Note: If the off-road equipment will sometimes be operated on a public road where a license plate is required, obtain U.S. Government license plates for the vehicle. Use “off-road identification plates” for identifying vehicles and equipment that is NEVER operated on a public road.

While all U.S. Government license plates MUST be registered within the Federal Motor Vehicle Registration System (FMVRS), “**Off-road identification plates**” are not required to be registered in FMVRS.



Sample Off-Road plate designs

Off-Road identification plate designs are approved by the GSA Office of Government-wide policy (vehicle.policy@gsa.gov) and manufactured by UNICOR. Off-Road identification plates should never begin with the agency prefix or any letter. The agency prefix should ideally be at the end (right side) of the plate number, but is not required.

State and Foreign Plates

This document discusses U.S. Government license plates only. Off-road identification plates are only discussed to differentiate them from actual U.S. Government license plates. State license plates, foreign country license plates and plates manufactured for use on vehicles outside the U.S. in accordance with foreign country agreements are not considered or discussed in detail in this document. State plates are registered by the issuing State's DMV and must follow State procedures. Likewise, locally issued plates in use in foreign countries must follow in-country laws and regulations. Off-road identification plates, State license plates, and locally issued plates (not U.S. Government plates) in foreign countries are not required to be registered in FMVRS. Use of State issued plates should be in accordance with FMR 102-34.110.