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Description of document: The state of California list of prohibited or banned personalized license plates, procedures for screening personalized license plate applications, and where available, administrative appeals of withdrawn personalized plates, 2012

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Legal Affairs Division  
Legal Office, C128  
Department of Motor Vehicles  
PO Box 932382  
Sacramento, CA 94232-3820

Note: Not all requested items were available from all respondents  
  
This material from state Motor Vehicle Departments contains references to language and material that some people may find offensive and may not be suitable for all ages.

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LEGAL AFFAIRS DIVISION  
LEGAL OFFICE, C128

**DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES**

P.O. BOX 932382  
SACRAMENTO, CA 94232-3820  
(916) 657-6469



December 12, 2012

Re: Public Records Act Request  
PRA-12-252

The Department of Motor Vehicles acknowledges receipt of check number 1363 in the amount of thirteen dollars and eighty cents (\$13.80) for payment of documents as requested under the Public Records Act.

Enclosed are the documents pertaining to your request.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at your convenience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Roger J. Sato'.

ROGER J. SATO  
Senior Staff Counsel

Enclosures

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## V C Section 5105 Application Cancellation of Plates

### Application; Cancellation of Plates

5105. (a) An applicant for issuance of environmental license plates or renewal of such plates in the subsequent year pursuant to this article shall file an application therefor in such form and by such date as the department may require, indicating thereon the combination of letters or numbers, or both, requested as a registration number. There shall be no duplication of registration numbers, and the department may refuse to issue any combination of letters or numbers, or both, that may carry connotation offensive to good taste and decency or which would be misleading or a duplication of license plates provided for in Article 8 (commencing with Section 5000) of Chapter 1 of Division 3.

(b) The department may cancel and order the return of any environmental license plate heretofore or hereafter issued, containing any combination of letters, or numbers, or both, which the department determines carries connotations offensive to good taste and decency or which would be misleading. Whenever the department orders any person to return any such environmental license plate containing any combination of letters or numbers, or both, which the department determines carries connotations offensive to good taste and decency or which would be misleading, the person so ordered may, in writing and within 10 days after receiving the order, demand a hearing, which shall be granted. The provisions of Chapter 5 (commencing with Section 11500), Part 1, Division 3, Title 2 of the Government Code, shall apply to hearings provided for in this subdivision. Any person ordered to return such plates shall either be reimbursed for any additional fees he paid for the plates pursuant to Section 5106 or 5108 for the registration year in which they are recalled, or be given, at no additional cost therefor, replacement environmental license plates, the issuance of which is in compliance with this code.

(c) The department may cancel and order the return of any environmental license plate, without opportunity to be heard, as specified in subdivision (b) of this section, if the license plate issued is a duplication of license plates provided for in Article 8 (commencing with Section 5000) of Chapter 1 of Division 3 or if the fee specified under subdivision (c) of Section 5106 has not been paid.

Amended Ch. 692 Stats. 1974. Effective January 1, 1975.

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**CALIFORNIA CODE OF REGULATIONS**  
**ARTICLE 3.1**  
**SPECIAL INTEREST LICENSE PLATES**

**§ 160.00. Applications and Fees for Special Interest License Plates.**

- (a) Sponsors of special interest license plates shall establish an account in a federally insured financial institution for the deposit of the funds collected for the required number applications, as specified in Vehicle Code Section 5060(d)(1), for the special interest license plates.
- (b) Sponsors shall submit monthly reports to the department indicating:
  - (1) Number of applications for special interest license plates received in the reporting month, by type (sequential/Environmental License Plate);
  - (2) Amount of fees collected in the reporting month, by type (sequential/ELP);
  - (3) Total number of applications and total amount of fees collected to date.
- (c) Sponsors shall submit the required number of applications, as specified in Vehicle Code Section 5060(d)(1), for the initial issuance of special interest license plates to the department, with a summary of the monthly reports for audit purposes.
- (d) The required number of initial applications, as specified in Vehicle Code Section 5060(d)(1), for special interest license plates shall be submitted to the department with the associated fees collected by the sponsoring organization:
  - (1) The fees shall be submitted to the department in the form of one check payable in an amount equal to the fees due;
  - (2) The check shall be made payable in United States funds to the Department of Motor Vehicles;
  - (3) The check shall be currently dated and signed by the person(s) designated as signatory(ies) for the account;
  - (4) The check shall be drawn on a California financial institution.
- (e) Applications for the initial number of special interest license plates, as specified in Vehicle Code Section 5060(d)(1), which are submitted to the department with more than one check will be returned, unprocessed, to the sponsor.
- (f) Sponsors shall submit an annual report to the department as specified in Vehicle Code Section 5060(h).

Note: Authority cited: Sections 1651 and 5110(a), Vehicle Code.  
Reference: Section 5060, Vehicle Code.

**HISTORY**

- 1. Amendment of article 3.1 heading and new section filed 5-19-99; operative 6-18-99 (Register 99, No. 21).
- 2. Amendment of section and Note filed 2-5-2002; operative 3-7-2002 (Register 2002, No. 6).

**§ 170.00. Information Required on a Special Interest/Environmental License Plate Application.**

- (a) An application for special interest/environmental license plates, as defined in Sections 5060 and 5103 of the Vehicle Code, shall be submitted in person or by mail to the department on a Special Interest License Plate Application, Form REG 17 (Rev. 7/2000), provided by the department and available on the Internet at [www.dmv.ca.gov](http://www.dmv.ca.gov).
  - (1) If the application is made in person, it shall be made to any department location which processes vehicle registrations.
  - (2) If the application is made by mail, it shall be sent to the Department of Motor Vehicles, P.O. Box 932345, Sacramento, CA 94232-3450, or to any department location which processes vehicle registrations.
- (3) Another department-approved version of this form with a different revision date shall be acceptable if the content of the form is in substantial compliance with the requirements of this section.
- (b) The application shall be accompanied by the applicable fee specified in Sections 4850, 5106 and 5108 of the Vehicle Code; the fee schedule is on the back of the form.
- (c) The application shall include the following information:
  - (1) An indication of whether the application is for original plates, for replacement plates or to reassign, hold or release current plates.
  - (2) The purchaser's or plate owner's true full name.
  - (3) The mailing address of the person who will be the plate owner.
  - (4) The name of the recipient, if the plates are a gift.
  - (5) An indication of whether the license plates will be assigned to an auto, truck, trailer, or motorcycle, and the type of plate ordered.
  - (6) The location of the department or auto club office where the special interest/environmental license plates will be picked up or exchanged for the current license plates and registration, if the license plates will not be mailed.
  - (7) The applicant's first, second, and third choices of the configuration of letters and numbers to appear on the license plates and the meaning of each.
    - (A) The configuration shall comply with the specifications of Section 5105 of the Vehicle Code.
    - (B) When a desired configuration is not available, a letter shall not be substituted for a number, nor shall a number be substituted for a letter, to create another configuration of a similar appearance.
    - (C) The number zero shall not be used in the configuration.
    - (D) The department shall refuse any configuration that may carry connotations offensive to good taste and decency, or which would be misleading, based on criteria which includes, but is not limited to, the following:

## CALIFORNIA CODE OF REGULATIONS – ARTICLE 3.1

1. The configuration has a sexual connotation or is a term of lust or depravity.
2. The configuration is a vulgar term; a term of contempt, prejudice, or hostility; an insulting or degrading term; a racially degrading term; or an ethnically degrading term.
3. The configuration is a swear word or term considered profane, obscene, or repulsive.
4. The configuration has a negative connotation to a specific group.
5. The configuration misrepresents a law enforcement entity.
6. The configuration has been deleted from regular series license plates.
7. The configuration is a foreign or slang word or term, or is a phonetic spelling or mirror image of a word or term falling into the categories described in subdivisions 1. through 6. above.
- (8) If the plate is reassigned, held for future use or relinquished, complete the appropriate information as required:
  - (A) The special interest license plate number.
  - (B) The Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) of the vehicle the plate was taken from.
  - (C) If reassigned, the current license plate number of the vehicle it will be on and that vehicle's VIN
  - (D) An indication if the plate is being reserved for future use.
  - (E) An indication of release of interest in the plate.
- (9) If the application is for replacement of lost, stolen or mutilated plates indicate whether one or two plates are needed.
- (10) A statement signed by the purchaser certifying under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California that the purchaser has provided true and correct information.
- (11) The date the application is signed.
- (12) The purchaser's daytime telephone number.
- (13) If the plate is being purchased as a gift, the plate owner specified in subdivision (c)(4), of this regulation, shall be the recipient, and the purchaser specified in subdivisions (c)(2), (10), and (12), of this regulation, shall be the applicant.
- (d) The department shall not honor a request for a change of choice or spacing in the letter/number configuration, or a request for a refund, after the license plate reservation is made, unless the request is due to departmental error.
- (1) If the department erred when making the special interest/environmental license plate reservation, and the plate owner requests a change, the plate owner shall be permitted to submit a new special interest/environmental license plates application without payment of additional fees.
- (2) If the department did not err when making the reservation, a new application and application fees shall be submitted for any change in the configuration.

Note: Authority cited: Sections 1651, 1652 and 5110, Vehicle Code.  
Reference: Sections 4850, 5060, 5101, 5102, 5103, 5105, 5106, 5108 and 5109, Vehicle Code.

### HISTORY

1. New section filed 9-27-94; operative 10-27-94 (Register 94, No. 39).
2. Amendment of section heading, section and Note filed 2-5-2002; operative 3-7-2002 (Register 2002, No. 6).
3. Editorial correction of subsection (c)(7)(D)7. (Register 2002, No. 23).

### § 170.02. Assignment of Environmental License Plates to Leased or Company Vehicle.

- (a) If the applicant is the lessee of the vehicle to which the environmental license plates are to be assigned but the registration certificate does not show the applicant's name as the lessee, a statement of facts authorizing the use of the environmental license plates on the vehicle shall be required from the leasing company.
- (b) If the environmental license plates are to be assigned to a company vehicle, a statements of facts authorizing the use of the environmental license plates on the vehicle shall be required from the company.

Note: Authority cited: Sections 1651 and 5110, Vehicle Code.  
Reference: Sections 5101, 5104 and 5105, Vehicle Code.

### HISTORY

1. New section filed 9-27-94; operative 10-27-94 (Register 94, No. 39).

### § 170.04. Receipt of Environmental License Plates as a Gift.

- (a) A statement of facts shall be required when the plates were ordered as a gift and the purchaser's name was incorrectly listed as the plate owner.
- (1) The statement of facts shall indicate that the plates are a gift to the registered owner or lessee of the vehicle to which the plates will be assigned and that no money changed hands.
- (2) The statement of facts shall be completed either by the original applicant or the recipient.

Note: Authority cited: Sections 1651 and 5110, Vehicle Code.  
Reference: Sections 5101, 5104 and 5105, Vehicle Code.

### HISTORY

1. New section filed 9-27-94; operative 10-27-94 (Register 94, No. 39).

### § 170.06. Surrender of Current Plates.

- (a) When application for environmental license plates is made for a currently registered vehicle, and the vehicle to which the plates will be assigned is known, the current plates shall be surrendered to the department at the time of application, with the following exception:

## Vehicle Registration Manual - Chapter 4

### 4.155 Personalized Configurations - Mandatory Refusal

The department **must refuse** any personalized special configuration that may carry connotations offensive to good taste and decency, or which would be misleading, based on criteria which includes, but is not limited to, any configuration that:

- Has a sexual connotation or is a term of lust or depravity.
- Is a vulgar term; a term of contempt, prejudice, or hostility; an insulting or degrading term; a racially degrading term; or an ethnically degrading term.
- Is a swear word or term considered profane, obscene, or repulsive.
- Has been restricted (deleted) from regular series license plates.
- Has a negative connotation to a specific group.
- Misrepresents a law enforcement entity.
- Is a foreign or slang word or term.
- Is a phonetic spelling or mirror image of a word or term falling into the categories described above.

**Similar Configurations - Do not** accept a personalized plate application with a configuration similar in appearance to an existing special plate. Applicants **cannot** substitute a letter for a number or a number for a letter in the middle, front, or end of a configuration if it creates a configuration similar to an existing special plate.

**Unacceptable Letter/Number Substitutions - Reject** any special plate application which contains "1" and "l" used interchangeably or "0" and "O" or "Q" used interchangeably. Do not forward the application to DMV Headquarters for review and/or refusal.

**NOTE:** Do not rely on the automated system to identify/reject misleading numbers/letters.

**Restricted License Plate Configurations -** The following configurations are deleted from the regular series license plate configuration and **are not** available for personalized plates:

ABM	ANO	APE	ARS	ASB	ASS	BAD	BAG	BED
BRA	BUN	BUT	BVD	CHP	CIA	COC	COK	CON
COP	CQC	CQK	CQN	CUL	CUM	CUN	CUR	CUZ

DAG	DAM	DDT	DIC	DIE	DIK	DOA	DUD	DUF
DUM	DUN	FAG	FAN	FAT	FBI	FCK	FKU	FOC
FOK	FQC	FQK	FQU	FUC	FUD	FUG	FUK	FUN
FUX	FUY	GAT	GAY	GEE	GOD	GQD	GUT	HAG
HAM	HEL	HEN	HIC	HIK	HIV	HOG	HOR	HQR
JAP	JAZ	JEW	JIG	KIK	KKK	KOC	KOK	KON
KOX	KQC	KQK	KQN	KQX	KYK	LAY	LSD	MEX
NAG	NGR	NIG	NIP	NUN	OVA	PEA	PEE	PEW
PIG	PIS	POT	POW	PST	PUD	PUS	PYS	QVA
RAG	RAT	RAW	RUT	SAC	SAK	SAM	SEX	SHT
SIF	SIN	SLA	SOB	SOT	SQB	SUC	SUK	SUR
SUX	TIT	TUB	UCK	UPP	UPU	URN	URP	USB
USR	VUC	VUK	VUX	WAD	WOP	WQP	YEP	YID

**Restricted Letter/Number Combinations** - The following combinations are not available for personalized plates, because they conflict with an existing plate series:

Plate Configuration	Example	License Type
1 letter; 1 or 2 numbers	A12	State Assembly
1 letter; 1 or 2 numbers; 1 letter	S99A	State Senate
1 letter; 1 or 2 numbers; 1 letter; 1 number (restricted only if first letter is A, S, or C)	C84R1	US Congress
1 letter; 2 numbers; 1 letter; 2 numbers	A12B34	OHV
1 letter; 4 numbers	H1234	Honorary Consul
1 letter; 5 numbers	A12345	Commercial
1 or 2 letters; 1 through 6 numbers (restricted only if the letters are E or SE.)	SE300000	Special Equipment
	E123456	Exempt (diamond/octagon E plates)

1 or 2 letters; 1 number; 1, 2 or 3 letters (restricted only if first letter is A, K, N, or W)	W6AB, WE7XY, or KA6RPZ	Amateur Radio
2 letters; 1 number	US1 & US2	US Senate
2 letters; 1 number; 1 letter	US1A-C US2A-C	
2 letters; 1 number; 1 letter	US1R-US9R	
2 letters; 1 number; 1 letter; 1 number (restricted only if first two letters are US)	US1R1-US1R9	
2 letters; 1 through 4 numbers (restricted only if HC or HV and 4 numbers)	HC1004 HV3	Horseless Carriage Historical Vehicle
2 letters; 3 numbers, 1 letter	HV000A	Historical Vehicle
2 letters; 3 numbers	LV000	Legion of Valor
2 letters; 4 numbers	AF1234 PP0001	Trailers Press Photographer
2 letters; 5 numbers	DP00000	Disabled Person
3 letters; 4 numbers (restricted only if the three letters are POW)	POW1234	POW
1 number; 1 letter; 4 numbers	1A1234	Motorcycle
1 number; 1 letter; 5 numbers	1A23456	Commercial
1 number, 2 letters, 4 numbers	2AA0000	Trailer
1 number; 3 letters; 3 numbers	2SAM123	Automobile
2 numbers; 1 letter; 2 numbers	12A34	Exempt Motorcycle
2 numbers; 1 letter; 4 numbers	12A3456	Motorcycle
3 numbers; 2 letters (restricted only to letters AA through E0)	000AA-000EO	Reserved
3 numbers; 3 letters	123SAM	Automobile
4 numbers; 2 letters	0000PH 1234AB 0000DP 0000DV	Purple Heart Vessels Disabled Person Disabled Veteran



5 numbers; 1 letter	12345R	Commercial
5 numbers; 2 letters	30000DP	Disabled Person
	00000DV	Disabled Veteran
5 numbers; 1 letter; 1 number	11111A1	Commercial
7 numbers	1234567	CA Exempt

**Application Review:**

If the configuration is...	then...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offensive to good taste or decency</li> <li>• Misleading</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Refuse the application. Do not key a reservation.</b></li> <li>• Note the configuration, its meaning, and the word "restrict" on a Statement of Facts (REG 256) form and mail it to:  DMV Special Processing Unit, MS D238 PO Box 932345 Sacramento, CA 94232-3450 Attn: Manager, "add to unacceptable file"</li> </ul>
Questionable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key a      in the REVIEW CODE field and write your concern on the file copy or a Statement of Facts (REG 256).</li> </ul>

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## Vehicle Registration Manual - Chapter 4

### 4.160 Personalized License Plate Applications

**Original Plate Applications** - Before a plate reservation can be processed, the applicant must complete a Special Interest License Plate Application (REG 17). The REG 17 must:

- Be completed in the **same** name as the reservation. The plate owner and the vehicle owner of record **must** be the same. A plate purchased as a gift must be keyed in the intended recipient's name.
- Show the type of vehicle (auto, commercial, etc.) to which the plates will be assigned.
- Show a field office or auto club location where the plates will be exchanged, if the specific vehicle to which the plates will be assigned is **not known**.
- The personalized configuration **must** be completed as required.
- The number zero (0) **cannot** be used; **only** the letter "O" is acceptable.
- The number one **must** be shown as "1."
- The letter "I" **must** be shown "I."
- The letter "I" cannot be substituted for the number "1" or vice versa.
- The letter "Q" cannot be substituted for the letter "O" or vice versa.
- An asterisk (\*) **must** be used to show where a full space is desired.
- A slash (/) **must** be used to show where a half-space is desired.
- The meaning must be explained appropriately for the configuration.
- If the number "69" is used, the make and current plate number or VIN for a 1969 year model vehicle to which the plates will be assigned must be part of the application (for verification purposes).

#### Processing:

- Key the personalized plate configuration. Refer to Job Aid 9 in the Reg Tech DART.
- Key the plate owner's last name first.
- Enter the appropriate mail code for the application using the following chart:

If the applicant...	then...

<p><b>Can</b> identify the vehicle to which the plates will be assigned</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enter mail code and complete the reservation transaction.</li> <li>• Assign the plates to the vehicle on your next transaction.</li> <li>• Pick up the plates assigned to the vehicle.</li> <li>• Issue the stickers, registration card, and a 60-day Temporary Operating Permit (REG 19).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Cannot</b> identify the vehicle to which the plates will be assigned</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enter the appropriate mail code</li> <li>• Advise the applicant that he/she will be notified when the plates are delivered to the office.</li> </ul>

- Circle the reserved choice on the REG 17.
- Have the customer verify the DMV file copy to confirm that the configuration (spaces and characters) was keyed correctly.
- If the request was keyed:
  - Correctly, the plates are on order. A refund will not be made from this point on.
  - Incorrectly or the customer is not satisfied, determine what changes are needed and alter the REG 17. Delete the incorrect choice and rekey the desired configuration.
- Advise the applicant that a confirmed reservation does not guarantee issuance of the special plates; the final determination is made by DMV Headquarters.

**IMPORTANT: POW and Firefighter License Plate Requests** - To ensure compliance with statutory requirements, there are additional processing requirements:

**POW** license plate applications - refer to the Prisoner of War License Plate section in this chapter for the additional processing requirements.

**Firefighter** license plate applications - refer to the Firefighter License Plate section in this chapter for additional processing requirements.

**Special License Plates as Gifts (CVC §5110)** - To reserve special license plates as a gift, the name of the intended recipient must be shown on the plate application.

**Cancelling a Reservation** - A special plate reservation **cannot** be cancelled if the work has been transmitted to DMV Headquarters. To cancel a reservation in work still in the office, void the original reservation transaction, make the correct reservation, and attach the new DMV file copy to the REG 17.

**Procedure if Special Plate Choices are Unavailable (CVC §5105)** - When a special plate application is received in the mail or in a dealer bundle and none of

the applicant's choices are available, return the original Special Interest License Plate Application (REG 17), a new REG 17 (in case the applicant wants to try again), and the application fee to the applicant or the dealer, as appropriate.

- **Requests Submitted by a Dealer** - Issue credit media or a refund on the bundle in the dealer's name and return it to the dealer. The dealer is responsible for contacting the customer and refunding the fee.
- **Requests Submitted by an Individual** - Return the applicant's check. Convert the fee to a receipt if only a portion of the fees are being returned or the fee was paid by other than a personal check. Return the receipt to the customer with the REG 17.

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