

OUR OPINIONS: No shortcut to driver's license

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution
January 9, 2002 Wednesday,, Home Edition

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The Atlanta Journal-Constitution
ajc.com

Section: Editorial;

Length: 299 words

Body

Need a new **driver's license**? Want a **license** that can never be suspended or revoked? Want an ID for nightclubs or hotel check-in?

Dream on.
AJC

The offer of such an international **driver's license** --- most often seen in unsolicited e-mail --- is a scam as well as a spam. But its appeal has grown for two reasons: Sept. 11, when millions of undocumented immigrants watched their hopes for gaining legal status set back by terrorism, and tougher driving legislation.

Desperate for some kind of official identification or **driver's license**, many immigrants are naive and desperate enough to pay \$100 or more to companies with impressive titles such as the Institute for International **Licensing**, the International **Licensing** Bureau and the University Degree Program.

The offers aren't limited to the Internet, said Ramon Moreno, director of protection services at the Mexican Consulate in Atlanta. He's seen businesses on Buford Highway offering "**driver's licenses**" for \$100; an ID is \$30.

Valid international **driver's licenses** do exist, but they have to be obtained in your country of origin, and are valid only abroad. Mexican immigrants, for example, would have to acquire the **license** in Mexico for it to be valid here.

Likewise, an official international **driver's license** issued in the United States is valid only abroad, and only when produced in conjunction with a valid **driver's license** from this country. Any person who produces a valid **driver's license** from a U.**S.** state can obtain an international **driver's license** from the American Automobile Association --- for 10 bucks.

"Avoid tickets, fines and mandatory **driver's** education," the e-mail urges. "Protect your privacy, and hide your identity." And while you're at it, cure cancer and win the lottery, too.

Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Subject: **DRIVERS LICENSES** (92%); **LICENSES** & PERMITS (91%); IMMIGRATION (90%); **DRIVER**

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EDUCATION (73%); EMBASSIES & CONSULATES (72%); ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS (71%); TERRORISM (71%); EDITORIALS & **OPINIONS** (50%)

Company: AMERICAN AUTOMOBILE ASSOCIATION (66%); AMERICAN AUTOMOBILE ASSOCIATION (66%)

Industry: **DRIVERS LICENSES** (92%); ELECTRONIC MAIL (89%); EMAIL MARKETING (77%); LOTTERIES (62%); HOTELS & MOTELS (58%); NIGHTCLUBS (58%)

Geographic: MEXICO (93%); UNITED STATES (92%)

Load-Date: January 9, 2002

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