

Vehicle licensing

Most vehicles need to 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 and vehicle licensing aren't the same, but can cause confusion. We've explained them here.

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 Factsheet 9: *Vehicle registration* 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 and their responsibilities

The registered person is the person recorded on the Motor Vehicle Register as the person responsible for the vehicle.

This isn't the same as legal ownership (and the Motor Vehicle Register doesn't record legal ownership).

Sometimes the registered person asks to add a joint registered person to their vehicle. We can only record one registered person per vehicle (this doesn't mean legal ownership).

Your vehicle responsibilities

There's information online about who can be a registered person, and everything that means you're responsible for.

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

This factsheet only focuses on your responsibilities for licensing your vehicle.

How to update the registered person's name

Update your name on the Motor Vehicle Register if it changes (eg 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 (eg 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.

Vehicle licences expire

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

Check your expiry dates

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

You can check the expiry date on your current licence label at any time.

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.

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

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

Sign up for email reminders

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

Over time, we'll be adding more vehicle-related notifications and communications to send by email too.

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 seven days.

If you've renewed online and your licence label hasn't arrived within seven 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 seven 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.

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

If you don't renew in time

If your licence expires and you don't renew it in time, we'll send you reminders:

- six weeks after it expires
- six months after it expires
- two to four weeks before we cancel the vehicle's registration (we do this when the vehicle has remained unlicensed for 12 months).

The registered person is responsible for keeping the vehicle licensed.

If you don't get the reminders

Make sure your details are up to date

As the registered person, you need to let us know as soon as anything changes.

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

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

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

Pay your licensing fees

We send the reminders to help you make sure you don't forget. Even if you don't receive a reminder, you're still responsible for the 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.

Check your licence label

It tells you when your licence is due to expire.

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 (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. If you don't, we'll send you the reminders mentioned in this factsheet.

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.

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

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 Factsheet 9: *Vehicle registration* for more information.

The information in this factsheet is a general guide only. It isn't the source of the law and shouldn't be used instead of authoritative legal documents. Some factsheets are updated frequently and print versions can quickly become out of date. To see if you've got the most up-to-date version of this factsheet, check www.nzta.govt.nz/factsheets or call us on 0800 108 809.

Do you need to get in touch with us?

- Visit our website: www.nzta.govt.nz.
- Email us: info@nzta.govt.nz.
- Find us on social media: www.nzta.govt.nz/socialmedia
- Call us: 0800 108 809.
- Write to us: NZ Transport Agency, Private Bag 11777, Palmerston North 4442.