



MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE · DRIVER SERVICES

Vehicle Title and Registration

[Boats, Personal Watercraft and Motorized Pontoons](#) | [Commercial & Heavy Vehicles](#) | [Light Vehicles \(cars, vans, pickups & SUVs\)](#) | [Motor Homes](#) | [Motorcycles & Quadricycles](#) | [Snowmobiles](#) | [Trailers](#) | [Travel Trailers](#) | [Security Interests \(Liens\)](#) | [Reference Guides & Online Services](#)

The [Title and Registration Bureau](#) regulates the titling and registration of motor vehicles. A motor vehicle cannot be titled in Montana without also being registered—the two processes occur simultaneously. Pickup campers are an exception—they must be titled, but are not registered.

Under state law, all motor vehicles including motor homes; motorcycles and quadricycles; travel trailers; utility trailers; all-terrain vehicles; sailboats over 12 feet in length; motorboats, jet skis and other motorized vessels; and snowmobiles must be registered with the state.

Customer Identification Numbers – Under the Montana Enhanced Registration & Licensing Information Network (MERLIN) system, all titling and registration transactions are recorded as part of a customer's unique account:

- For individuals, the customer account number is the driver license or state or tribal identification card number.
- For businesses, the customer account number is the federal employer or tax identification number or, in the absence of these, the number assigned to the business when it registered with the Secretary of State's office.

The Motor Vehicle Division collects customer identification numbers from businesses during titling and registration transactions.

Mobile Homes – To move a mobile home or manufactured home on a public highway, you must meet the requirements set out in [15-24-206](#) of the Montana Code Annotated. For further information on this process, contact your [county treasurer](#) or the [Montana Department of Revenue](#).

Registration Provisions

- **New residents** must apply for a Montana vehicle title and register their vehicles within 60 days of establishing residency.
- **Military Employees:** Non-resident military personnel stationed in Montana may register their vehicles in their home jurisdictions or in Montana, unless they are gainfully employed in Montana outside of their military duties. If they are gainfully employed outside those duties, they must title and register their vehicles in Montana.
- **Non-Residents:** Under MCA [61-3-701 through 704](#), non-residents who are gainfully employed in Montana must present their current out-of-state vehicle registration to the county treasurer's office. Taxes or fees in lieu of taxes are due, along with appropriate registration fees. Non-residents may choose to register by the calendar quarter. The vehicle must display the license plates from both its home state and from Montana.

Under MCA [61-3-321](#), registration fees (see list in sidebar) are in addition to the county option tax levied on light vehicles and the fees levied in lieu of taxes on other vehicles. Registration fees do not include special plate fees for [personalized plates](#) and [specialty plates](#), or other miscellaneous fees.

Registration fees are due upon renewal or transfer of ownership. No credit is given for taxes or fees paid.

Organ-Donor and Brain-Injury Awareness - When you register your vehicle, you may make a donation of \$1 or more to organ-donor and traumatic brain-injury education and support programs. Just ask your county treasurer.

Titling Provisions

How to Title a Motor Vehicle

1. Apply at the [county treasurer's office](#) in the county you live in.
2. Present the previous year's Montana registration receipt or out-of-state title:
 - If you have recently purchased a vehicle from a licensed auto dealer, the dealer will send or deliver the necessary paperwork to the county treasurer's office.
 - The county clerk may ask you to complete a [Statement of Fact](#) (Form MV100) to clarify certain facts about the title transfer.
 - Be prepared to pay title and security interest/lien filing fees.
3. Once the title process has been completed, you must pay all taxes and fees, and your vehicle will be registered and [license plates](#) issued.
4. A copy of the registration receipt **must** be kept in each vehicle at all times, along with proof of liability insurance as required in MCA [61-6-301](#).
5. When the ownership of a vehicle titled in Montana is transferred, the signatures of all parties shown on the face of the title must sign off on the title and have their signatures notarized.

Corrections to a Title - Any erasures or deletions on the title void the document. See the county treasurer to correct any errors.

Appointment Scheduling
County Treasurer Motor Vehicle Offices
Driver Exam Stations
Driver License Sanctions & Ignition Interlock
Driver Licensing
Driver Licensing: Commercial
Driving Records
Driving Safety
Forms & Other Documents
License Plates
License Plate Designs/Fees
MVD by the Numbers - Statistics & Collected Fees
Other Resources
Required Documents, including Proof of Identity
Vehicle ID Number (VIN) Inspections
Vehicle Title & Registration Contact MVD

Replacement Titles

1. Fill out the [Application for Replacement Certificate of Title](#) (Form MV7). This form can be filled out and printed on your computer.
2. Mail the completed form and a \$10 fee for all motor vehicles, including boats and trailers, to the [Title and Registration Bureau](#).

Bonded Titles - If you purchase a vehicle from someone and no record of the title can be found, you may apply for a bonded title in accordance with MCA [61-3-208](#).

1. Go to your [county treasurer's office](#) to discuss the bonded title process. Take any proof of ownership and a completed [Vehicle Identification Number Inspection Certificate](#) (Form MV20) with you.
2. Complete the [Affidavit](#) (Form MV10), making sure you include the circumstances through which you acquired ownership. Disclose any security interests (liens) you are aware of and the value of the vehicle:
 - o If the value is over \$500, you must secure a bond equal to the value determined by the surety company.
 - o If the vehicle is worth \$500 or less, you simply certify to its value. You must either:
 - reference the average trade-in or wholesale value determined by the national appraisal guide as of January 1 for the year in which you are applying, or
 - if an appraisal guide is not available, certify that, to your knowledge, its value is \$500 or less.
3. The Title and Registration Bureau issues a title with the words "BONDED TITLE" and the expiration date of the bond printed on its face.
4. If no claim is made on the vehicle within three years, the bureau then issues a clear title.

Registration & Fees

Boat, Personal Watercraft and Motorized Pontoon Registration and Fees

Permanent registration – Under [61-3-321\(10\)\(a\)\(i\)](#) of the Montana Code Annotated, all boats, personal watercraft and motorized pontoons must be permanently registered.

One-time Fees for Motorboats (including Motorized Canoes and Motorized Rubber Rafts), Personal Watercraft, Motorized Pontoons and Sailboats

Fee	Receipt Code	Length	Amount
Flat fee	40-BTFLAT	Under 16 feet	\$65.50
		16 feet or longer but under 19 feet	\$125.50
		19 feet or longer	\$295.50

Required Decals - To comply with both state and federal laws, Montana boaters need to display:

- a **permanent registration decal** issued by their local county treasurer's office – the permanent decal for boats is white and includes the abbreviation "PERM." The decal must be placed on the left side of the forward half of the boat, three inches behind the identifying numbers. AND
- **two boat validation decals** – the decals are free and expire every three years.

If your boat, sailboat or personal watercraft is already permanently registered, contact your local Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks office for information on how to get the required validation decals, or go online to FWP's [Register Boats](#) page.

If you are purchasing a new or used boat, sailboat or personal watercraft, your local [county treasurer's office](#) can issue all of the required validation decals.

Commercial and Heavy Vehicle Registration and Fees

Annual registration – Under [61-3-529](#) of the Montana Code Annotated, fees are imposed on commercial and heavy vehicles in lieu of property taxes.

Beginning January 2006, the registration of a commercial or heavy vehicle expires 12 months from the month in which it was first registered. You must renew your registration by the end of the following month, which is indicated on the registration decal on the rear license plate.

For example, the plates on a truck or truck tractor first registered in Montana on April 15, 2006, will expire on March 30, 2007, with the renewal grace period extending until April 30, 2007.

(Prior to this change, the license plates for trucks, vans and buses over one ton expired at the end of the year and had to be renewed by February 15.)

Fee Schedule – The fees vary according to the Manufacturer's Rated Capacity—the manufacturer's rated gross vehicle weight for a bus or heavy truck or the manufacturer's rated gross combined weight for a truck tractor. Fees for heavy vehicles are based on the age (model year subtracted from the current year) and rated capacity of the vehicle. This fee is in addition to:

- Gross Vehicle Weight fees
- Registration fee – \$22.75
- Montana Highway Patrol Salary and Retention Fee – \$5

Fee Schedule for Buses, Heavy Trucks and Truck Tractors

Age of Vehicle	Rated Capacity			
	16,999 pounds or less	17,000 - 26,999 pounds	27,000 - 54,999 pounds	55,000 pounds or more
1 year or less	\$117	\$167	\$284	\$375
2 years	\$109	\$150	\$250	\$300
3 years	\$100	\$134	\$220	\$266
4 years	\$92	\$117	\$184	\$242
5 years	\$83	\$109	\$160	\$195
6 years	\$75	\$100	\$134	\$167

7 years	\$66	\$91	\$117	\$147
8 years	\$58	\$83	\$100	\$125
9 years	\$50	\$75	\$92	\$109
10 years	\$41	\$58	\$79	\$92
11 to 12 years	\$33	\$50	\$67	\$76
13 to 14 years	\$28	\$37	\$52	\$61
15 to 16 years	\$25	\$30	\$38	\$47
17 to 18 years	\$18	\$26	\$29	\$36
19 to 20 years	\$13	\$19	\$22	\$26
21 years or more	\$10	\$12	\$16	\$20

Light Vehicle Registration and Fees

The owner of a light vehicle (passenger cars, pickup trucks one-ton and under, vans and sport utility vehicles) may choose one of the following renewal period options, MCA [61-3-311](#):

- **12-month registration** – The owner pays one year of the registration rate, county option tax, all other registration fees and any special plate fees.
- **24-month registration**, MCA [61-3-321\(2\)\(c\)](#) – The owner pays the registration rate, county option tax, all other registration fees (except for the license fee for each 12-month period) and any special plate fees for the two-year period.
- **Permanent registration**, MCA [61-3-562](#) – The owner of a light vehicle 11 years old or older may choose to permanently register the vehicle. This registration does not need to be renewed as long as ownership is unchanged. Fees collected at the time of permanent registration are:
 - \$87.50 registration rate
 - \$5 Montana Highway Patrol Salary and Retention Fee
 - county option tax, \$4 optional state park fee, certain special plate fees and, for light trucks, the gross vehicle weight (GVW) fees

Note: Light vehicles cannot be permanently registered if they display a license plate that requires recertification or a yearly donation fee. These include: national guard, reserve armed forces, amateur radio, collegiate and some organization specialty plates, with these exceptions – by paying a one-time contribution, light vehicles 11 years and older that are eligible for permanent registration, and trailers that must be permanently registered, may have sponsored plates.

The registration period and the expiration date shown on the license plates for light vehicles are determined when the vehicle is first titled and registered in Montana, MCA [61-3-314](#). Please renew your license plates during the month shown on your license plates at the [county treasurer's office](#) in the county you reside in.

Registration Rate, MCA [61-3-321\(2\)\(d\)](#) – based on the age of the vehicle, determined by subtracting the model year of the vehicle from the calendar year for which the registration fee is due. For example, the age of a 1997 model year Chevrolet passenger car registered in 2004 would be 7 years, resulting in a registration rate of \$87.

Age of Vehicle	Registration Rate
0 to 4 years	\$217
5 to 10 years	\$87
11 years or more	\$28

County Option Tax – Counties may impose a county option tax based on the manufacturer's suggested retail price, depreciated according to the schedule established in MCA [61-3-503](#). The age of the vehicle is determined by subtracting the model year from the current calendar year. For example, the age of a 2005 model year sport utility vehicle registered in 2004 would be -1 year, resulting in a depreciation multiplier of 100%.

Depreciation Multiplier for Calculating County Option Tax

Age of Vehicle	Automobile	Truck	Van	Sport Utility Vehicle
-1 year	100%	100%	100%	100%
0 years	90%	96%	93%	98%
1 year	80%	91%	86%	94%
2 years	69%	86%	78%	90%
3 years	58%	80%	69%	84%
4 years	49%	73%	60%	76%
5 years	41%	66%	52%	67%
6 years	33%	57%	45%	57%
7 years	26%	49%	38%	48%
8 years	21%	43%	32%	39%
9 years	17%	37%	27%	33%
10 years	14%	31%	22%	29%
11 years	12%	26%	18%	25%
12 years	10%	22%	15%	22%
13 years	9%	18%	13%	21%
14 years	9%	15%	11%	19%
15 years	9%	13%	9%	17%

Motor Home Registration and Fees

Annual registration – Under [61-3-321\(7\)](#) of the Montana Code Annotated, motor-home owners pay a fee in lieu of taxes, based on the age of the motor home. The age is determined by subtracting the model year from the current year.

The registration of a motor home expires 12 months from the month in which it was first registered. You must renew your registration by the end of the following month, which is indicated on the registration decal on the rear license plate.

Permanent registration – Owners may choose to permanently register motor homes that are 11 years old or older. Permanent registration does not transfer with the motor home when there is a change of ownership.

Motor homes must also pay:

- \$5 Montana Highway Patrol Salary and Retention Fee
- \$10 new issue plate fee

Motor homes that are used as commercial vehicles and are issued truck plates must also pay the gross vehicle weight (GVW) fee, [MCA 61-10-201](#).

Registration Fee Schedule – Additional fees for motor homes are based on the age (model year subtracted from the current year) of the vehicle.

Age of Vehicle	Fee
Less than 2 years	\$282.50
2 years and over, but less than 5	\$224.25
5 years and over, but less than 8	\$132.50
8 years or more	\$97.50
11 years or more - permanent registration option	\$237.50

Motorcycle and Quadricycle Registration and Fees

Permanent registration – Under [61-3-321](#) of the Montana Code Annotated, all street-legal motorcycles and quadricycles must be registered permanently. You may register a motorcycle or quadricycle for both highway and off-highway use by paying the fees for both uses.

Street-legal Motorcycle and Quadricycle One-time Fees

Fee	Receipt Code	Amount
Flat fee - street-legal only, or	05-MCFLAT	\$53.25
Flat fee - street-legal/off-highway combination use	06-MCOHV	\$114.50
Motorcycle Safety Fee	57-MCSAFE	\$16.00
Montana Highway Patrol Salary and Retention Fee	72-MHPFEE	\$5.00
Chrome for Kids plate See Service Organizations Plate Designs		
Plate Manufacturing Fee	70-NEWISS	\$10.00

Off-highway Motorcycle and Quadricycle One-time Fees

Fee	Receipt Code	Amount
Flat fee	45-OHFLAT	\$61.25
Montana Highway Patrol Salary and Retention Fee	72-MHPFEE	\$5.00

The single permanent decal for off-highway vehicles is white and includes the abbreviation "PERM".

Snowmobile Registration and Fees

Permanent registration – Under [61-3-321\(11\)\(a\)](#) of the Montana Code Annotated, snowmobiles are permanently registered except for those owned by companies that rent snowmobiles. Snowmobiles that are used exclusively as rentals may be registered annually for the first two years, after which they must be permanently registered.

Fee	Year	Receipt Code	Amount
Flat fee - Personal use	N/A	16-SNFLAT	\$60.50
Business rental use	1st	N/A	\$40.50
	2nd	N/A	\$20.00
	3rd - permanent registration required	N/A	\$60.50

The single permanent decal for snowmobiles is white and includes the abbreviation "PERM". The decal must be placed on the left side of the cowl.

Trailer Registration and Fees

Permanent registration – Under [61-3-321\(3\)\(a-b\)](#) of the Montana Code Annotated, all trailers must be permanently registered. The single decal for trailers is the same as the decal for permanently registered light vehicles.

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Fee	Receipt Code	Declared Weight	Amount
Flat fee in lieu of tax	63-TLFLAT	Under 6,000 pounds	\$61.25
		6,000 pounds and over	\$148.25
Highway Patrol Salary and Retention Fee	72-MHPFEE	N/A	\$5.00
New Issue Plate Fee	70-NEWISS	N/A	\$10.00

Travel Trailer Registration and Fees

Permanent registration – Under [61-3-321\(9\)\(a\)](#) of the Montana Code Annotated, all travel trailers must be permanently registered.

Fee	Receipt Code	Length	Amount
Flat fee	18-RTFLAT	Under 16 feet	\$72.00
		16 feet and over	\$152.00
Montana Highway Patrol Salary and Retention Fee	72-MHPFEE	N/A	\$5.00
New Issue Plate	70-NEWISSUE	N/A	\$10.00

Motor Vehicle Security Interests

A security interest is an interest in personal property that secures payment or performance of an obligation. For example, if someone took out a "title loan" on a vehicle and did not meet the specified repayment schedule, the lender could collect its security interest by taking the vehicle. However, a lender cannot collect on a security interest if the owner of the vehicle has not acknowledged the security interest by signing the title or [Security Interest Action](#) form (Form MV81B).

Security Interest Filing Fees – \$8 for a security interest on all motor vehicles, including boats, trailers and snowmobiles. Security interests on newly purchased vehicles or vehicles new to Montana are filed at the [county treasurer's office](#).

Collateral Security Interests – A lending institution files a security interest against a vehicle currently titled in your name through the [Title and Registration Bureau](#). Since Montana is not a title holding state, the Montana title is mailed to the registered owner, and the lending institution receives a Notice of Security Interest/Lien Filing/Lien Release/Repossession form with which it can either release a security interest or apply for a repossession title.

How to Have a Security Interest Removed from a Title

- The secured party mails to the [Title and Registration Bureau](#) either:
 - a completed Notice of Security Interest/Lien Filing/Lien Release/Repossession form or the generic [Release of Security Interest or Lien](#) (Form MV37A) or
 - a security interest/lien release on letterhead with a complete vehicle description and lien information
- A new Montana title is not automatically issued once the secured parties have released their interest.
- Should the owner wish to have a new title issued without the security interest showing, the owner must send the original title and \$10 to the Title and Registration Bureau. The bureau then issues a clear title. If the bureau does not have a security interest/lien release on file, the title is returned to the owner with a letter asking to have the title returned along with a security interest/lien release.

How to Find Out if a Security Interest is Filed on a Vehicle

Contact the [Title and Registration Bureau](#) with the Vehicle Identification Number and the registered owner's name and address. The bureau will let you know if a security interest is filed on the vehicle.

Out-of-state Lienholders: If an out-of-state secured party is holding the title for your vehicle, it is still possible to transfer the title to Montana.

- Ask your [county treasurer](#) for a [Foreign Title Transfer](#) (Form MV63). Complete and sign the form.
- Mail the form to the secured party, asking that your out-of-state title be released to your county treasurer's office.
- When the county treasurer's office receives the secured party's request and the out-of-state title, the new Montana title is sent to the out-of-state secured party.

Reference Guides & Online Services

- [Decoding a Montana Title, Registration & Mail Renewal Card](#)
 - [MVD by the Numbers](#)
 - [Title Manual](#)
 - [Temporary Registration Permit Service](#)
 - [Vehicle Registration Renewal Service](#)
 - [Vehicle Search Service](#)
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