

South Carolina Driver's Manual

CARS

TRUCKS

CYCLES



A Message from the Executive Director

The South Carolina Department of Motor Vehicles developed this handbook as a study guide to help you learn the rules, regulations and requirements necessary to obtain your beginner's permit and driver's license.

Driving is a privilege and a tremendous responsibility for every person who gets behind the wheel. If you are learning to drive, this is an exciting time for you. You should continually practice to develop your skills. The more you practice, the more effectively you can deal with the many circumstances you will encounter while you are behind the wheel of a car.

I encourage all parents and guardians to take an active role in their child's or dependent's learning process. Studying this manual with your children and being a positive example for them when you are behind the wheel will help them become knowledgeable drivers. Help them learn how to safely operate a vehicle, in good and bad weather, and master the skills they need to truly become good drivers.

Each time you get on the road, stay alert and make sure you and all of your passengers always wear safety belts. Not only is it the law, but a safety belt can help reduce your risk of serious injury or death by more than 50 percent if you are involved in a collision.

Please do not drink and drive, drive while you are sleepy or drive at speeds that are in excess of the posted limits. Being a responsible and courteous driver can make the difference between life and death. Remember not only your life but the lives of others depend on you. I encourage all drivers on South Carolina's roads to drive carefully, courteously and safely.

Marcia S. Adams
SCDMV Executive Director

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DISCLAIMER:

The state motor vehicle laws are not reproduced in their entirety and the wording is not identical. Due to possible legislative changes in federal and state law and SCDMV Policy, the information in this manual may not always be current. SCDMV will make every effort to incorporate any changes as soon as possible.

**For more information, please visit our website at:
www.scdmvonline.com**

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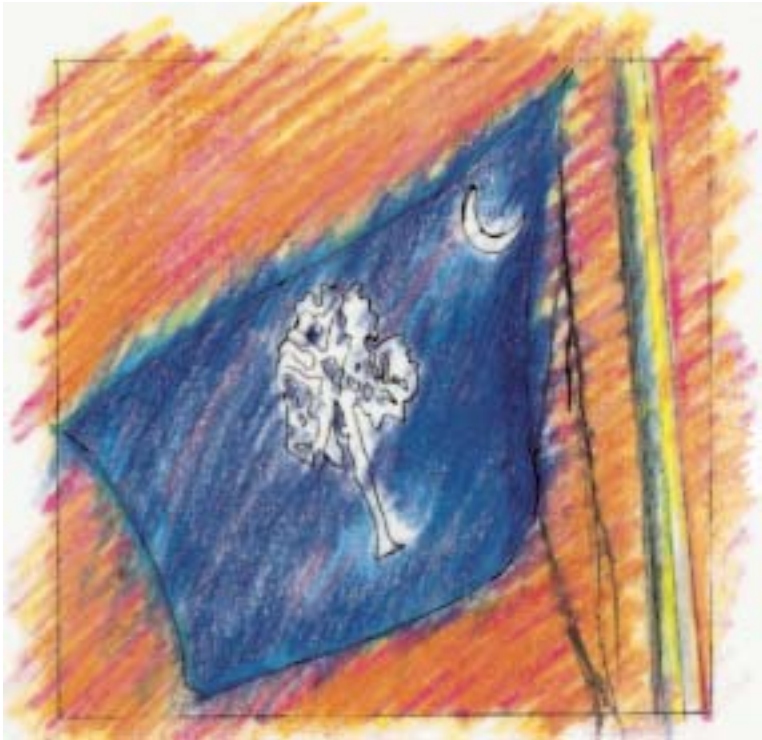
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NOTE: Each section of this manual is color coded for easy reference. Color bars can be found above the page number on each page.

	Introduction To Driver's License and General Information	GRAY
	Cars: The Road Test	BLUE
	Trucks	YELLOW
	Cycles	GREEN
	Traffic Signs, Signals, Markings	RED



Introduction To Driver's License



The Rules Of The Road

This book is your guide to good driving. It explains the rules of the road and what the law expects of you as a driver.

The purpose is to help you learn traffic-control devices, signs and pavement markings, which you must know before you get on the highway.

Classes Of Licenses

SC issues classified licenses as proof that you've been examined and are qualified to operate a particular type of vehicle.

- **Class A:** Any combination of vehicles with a GCWR of 26,001 or more pounds provided the GVWR of the vehicle(s) being towed is in excess of 10,000 pounds.
- **Class B:** Any single vehicle with a GVWR of 26,001 or more pounds, or any such vehicle towing a vehicle not in excess of 10,000 pounds GVWR.
- **Class C:** Any single vehicle, or combination of vehicles, that does not meet the definitions of Group A or Group B, but either is designed to transport 16 or more passengers, including the driver, or is placarded for hazardous materials.
- **Class D:** Operator's License: Allows you to drive a single unit or combination of vehicles not over 26,000 pounds gross vehicle weight and includes Class G. (Minimum age 15)
- **Class E:** Allows the same as Class D and G, plus single unit vehicles weighing over 26,000 pounds gross vehicle weight that do not meet the definition of Group A, B and C as contained herein. (Minimum age 18)
- **Class F:** Allows operation of all vehicles covered in Class D, and Class E, and Class G and all other combinations of vehicles with a gross vehicle weight (GVW) in excess of 26,000 pounds that do not meet the definition of Group A, B, and C as contained herein. (Minimum age 18)
- **Class M:** Allows you to drive motorcycles and mopeds. (Minimum age 15)
- **Class G:** Allows you to operate a moped. If you have a valid driver's license or permit in any of the other four classifications, you will not be required to obtain a license to drive a moped. (Minimum age 14)

Each qualified driver will have only one driver's license, endorsed for one or more of the classifications. It is illegal to have more than one valid driver's license. If you drive a motorcycle and another type of

vehicle, your license will be endorsed for two classifications, after completion of driving tests for both types of vehicles. A moped Class G license requires an eye and written test only. A driver may have a moped license and an auto or truck license, but not on the same license.

When driving you must have a valid driver's license, vehicle registration and valid insurance card in your possession. If you do not, you may be subject to a fine.

Many employers have been certified to have approved safety officers within their companies to administer the road test portion of the license examination for Class A, B, C, E and F vehicles only. The vision and knowledge tests, however, must be administered by the Department of Motor Vehicles.

Beginner's Permit

To apply for a beginner's permit, you must be 15 years of age or older. You must provide a birth certificate, social security card or its equivalent, proof of residency, and must pass the vision and knowledge tests. If you are under 18 years of age, you must have a parent or legal guardian sign your application.

If you have a valid out-of-state beginner's permit, you may obtain a beginner's permit in this state. The time you held your out-of-state permit also counts toward the 180 day requirement. If your permit has expired, however, you must take the vision and knowledge tests to get a S.C. beginner's permit.

Regardless of your age, if you have never been licensed or have proof of past driving experience, you must hold your beginner's permit for 180 days before being eligible for a driver's license (law effective March 6, 2002). With a beginner's permit, you may:

- Operate a motor vehicle from 6 a.m. to midnight with a licensed driver who is at least 21 years old, who has at least one year of driving experience, and who is sitting in the front seat with you.
 - Drive motorcycles, motor scooters or light motor driven cycles from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. (8 p.m. during daylight savings time). You may not operate a motorcycle, motor scooter or light motor driven cycle at any other time with a beginner's permit unless you are supervised by a Class M licensed parent or guardian. If you are operating a three-wheeled vehicle, the driver accompanying you must be directly behind you on a saddle-type seat or beside you on a bench type seat.
 - Your driving privileges will be suspended for six months if you receive traffic violations totaling six or more points.
- For information concerning Commercial Beginner's Permit requirements, refer to the SC Commercial Driver's License Manual.

Conditional License

To apply for a Conditional Driver's license, you must be 15 years of age and have held your beginner's permit for at least 180 days. You must also bring your birth certificate, social security card, proof of residency, insurance information, and your parent or guardian to sign your application. You must also submit Form PDLA that certifies you have:

- 1) Completed a driver's education course,
- 2) Had satisfactory school attendance,
- 3) Practiced driving with your parent or legal guardian for at least 40 hours, including 10 hours of driving practice at night.

Form PDLA allows you to submit all of these certifications and is available at your school and the SCDMV web site at www.scdmvonline.com. When you apply for your conditional license, you will also have to pass the vision and road skills test.

If you have a conditional driver's license, you may drive alone during daylight hours. In SC, daylight hours are defined as 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., or 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. during daylight savings time. You may drive after daylight hours until midnight while accompanied by a licensed driver that is at least 21 years of age or older. If you drive after midnight, you must be accompanied by a licensed parent or guardian.

With a conditional license, you cannot transport more than two passengers who are under the age of 21 unless you are accompanied by a licensed adult who is at least 21 years old. The only exception is if you are transporting family members or students to and from school.

You may obtain full driving privileges when you are 16 if you have had your license for one year and have no traffic offenses or been involved in any at-fault accidents. Your driving privileges will be suspended for six months if you receive traffic violations totaling six or more points.

Special Restricted License

To apply for a Special Restricted Driver's license, you must be 16 years of age and have held your beginner's permit for at least 180 days or have a conditional license. You must also bring your birth certificate, social security card, proof of residency, insurance information, and your parent or guardian to sign your application. You must also submit Form PDLA that certifies you have:

- 1) Completed a driver's education course,
- 2) Had satisfactory school attendance,
- 3) Practiced driving with your parent or legal guardian for at least 40 hours, including 10 hours of driving practice at night.

Form PDLA allows you to submit all of these certifications and is available at your school and the SCDMV web site at www.scdmvonline.com. When you apply for your special restricted license, you will also have to pass the vision and road skills test.

If you have a special restricted driver's license, you may drive alone during daylight hours. In SC, daylight hours are defined as 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., or 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. during daylight savings time. You may drive after daylight hours until midnight while accompanied by a licensed driver that is at least 21 years of age or older. If you drive after midnight, you must be accompanied by a licensed parent or guardian.

If the time limitations cause problems for you at your job or school, they may be waived. You must prove to the department that they interfere with your job, education or travel between home, school, vocational training or employment opportunities by submitting two notarized statements:

1. A statement from your parent or legal guardian, and
2. A statement from your employer or school official.

Both statements must give the reason for the waiver. The waiver will not allow you to drive after midnight.

With a special restricted license, you cannot transport more than two passengers who are under the age of 21 unless you are accompanied by a licensed adult who is at least 21 years old. The only exception is if you are transporting family members or students to and from school.

You may obtain full driving privileges when you are 16 if you have had your license for one year and have no traffic offenses or been involved in any at-fault accidents. Your driving privileges will be suspended for six months if you receive traffic violations totaling six or more points.

Regular Driver's License

If you are at least 17 years old and have held a beginner's permit for 180 days, you are eligible for a regular SC driver's license. The requirements are as follows:

- If you are under 18 years of age and have never been licensed, you must bring your parent or legal guardian with you to sign your application.
- If you are 18 years old or older, you do not need the signature of your parent or legal guardian.
- You must bring your birth certificate, social security card, proof of residency and insurance information.
- You must pass the vision and road skills tests.

General License Expiration

If you are a United States citizen and you visit a SCDMV branch office to obtain an original or renewal license, you will receive a ten-year license unless you are over 65 years of age. Persons who are 65 years of age or older may not obtain a ten year license, but will be issued a five year license. If you apply for a renewal license online, you will be issued a five-year license.

United States Citizens

If you have a driver's license issued for a period of five years, your license is good until your birthday five years from the year it was issued. If you have a ten-year license, your license is good until your birthday ten years from the year in which your license was issued. If your birthday passes and you have not renewed your license within nine months of the expiration dates, you will be required to take the knowledge and road tests again.

If it has not expired and you have not had more than five points assessed against your driving record during the preceding two years, you will be required to take only the eye test. But if you have had more than five points charged against your driving record for traffic violations in the preceding two years, you will have to take the eye test and the knowledge test.

Military Personnel

South Carolina licensed military personnel must maintain a valid license at all times. When stationed outside the state, you may renew a noncommercial license one time by mail by first obtaining proper forms from the Department before the expiration date of your license. You will have to take the knowledge and road tests if your license has expired nine months or more.

Non-United States Citizens

The expiration date of your driver's license will be determined by your authorized period of stay in the United States or the expiration dates of your employment authorization document. If your license expiration date passes and you have not renewed your license within nine months, you will have to take the knowledge and road tests again.

Newcomers and Non-Residents

If you come into South Carolina from another state and establish a permanent residence, you must get a South Carolina driver's license, and also a vehicle license if you own a vehicle.

If you have a valid driver's license issued by the state from which you moved, you can use it for 90 days, after which time you must surrender it and qualify for a South Carolina license by examination.

You may have only one valid motor vehicle driver's license or operator's license at any time. To obtain a SC driver's license, you must present your out-of-state driver's license, birth certificate, social security card, proof of residency and insurance information.

Nonresident drivers from other states, such as students and military personnel and their dependents living temporarily in South Carolina, may drive in South Carolina without obtaining a South Carolina driver's license by maintaining home state driver's license and license plates.

The Licensing Procedure

If you have studied and practiced carefully before attempting the road test, you should have no trouble passing the test.

Contact your local licensing office to check the hours for examinations. To ensure you allow enough time for testing, you should try to arrive at least one hour before the office closes. SCDMV offices do not offer road tests for any type of driver license during inclement weather. Rainy streets can make maneuvering a vehicle more difficult for new drivers and ice on the roads can be hazardous for all drivers.

When you are ready, you must take a licensed driver with you to the place of examination, since you cannot legally drive alone.

Road tests are not given in especially bad weather. But ordinarily, they would not be interrupted for light rain.

These are the basic requirements for passing the test:

- You must see well enough to drive.
- You must be physically and mentally able to drive.
- You must understand the meaning of traffic signs, signals and pavement markings.
- You must have your vehicle in good mechanical condition. The driver is responsible for having a vehicle in safe condition.
- You must know how to drive safely on streets and highways.
- You must show that you respect the rights of other drivers, bicyclists, pedestrians, motorcyclists or others who share the roads.
- Knowledge and/or skill tests may be taken only once a day or at the return time set by the examiner.

Documents You Will Need

To get a beginner's permit, driver's license or identification card, you must provide proper identification. The documents you will need will vary based on whether or not you are a United States citizen. Documents will not be accepted if there is evidence that they have been altered. Photocopies of documents are not accepted.

For the most up-to-date information about SCDMV requirements, please visit our website at www.scdmvonline.com or call SCDMV at (803)896-5000.

United States Citizens

If you are a United States citizen applying for a first time beginner's permit, driver's license or identification card, you must provide original documents showing proof of your U.S. citizenship, identity, social security number, SC residency and insurance information. The documents SCDMV accepts as proof are as follows:

- **Proof of U.S. Citizenship/Identity, Name and Date of Birth**
 - Birth certificate with birth/file number and registrar's signature issued by the county or Bureau of Vital Statistics.
 - Birth certificate from U.S. territory (must be translated if not in English) which includes Puerto Rico, Guam, U.S. Virgin Islands, U.S. Samoa
 - Delayed Birth Certificate (If a birth certificate was not issued at the time of birth, the applicant can apply for a birth certificate from the Bureau of Vital Statistics
 - U.S. Passport (current or expired not more than ten years)
 - Original Certificate of Naturalization USCIS form (N-550 or N-570)
 - U.S. government issued Consular Report of Birth Abroad
 - Certificate of United States Citizenship (N-560 or N-561)

If your original birth certificate shows that you were not born in the United States, you must also provide an additional document from the above list. If the birth certificate is not in English, it must be translated. If your name has changed and the new name is not reflected on your identification document, you must also provide court documents, such as your marriage certificate or adoption records indicating your legal name change.

- **Proof of Social Security Number**

The name on your social security card or substitute document must match the name on your identity documents. The document

you present must contain your social security number.

- Original Social Security Card
- Social Security Form SSA-1099, Survivor Benefit Form
- United States Military Photo Identification Card (active, retired or reservist military status DOD, ID, DD-2)
- Current military dependent ID card
- US Uniform Services Identification and Privilege Card (DD1173) that contains a photograph
- Voter Registration Card
- Letter from Social Security Administration
- Payroll stub with employer's name and applicant's name
- W-2 form with employer's name and address and applicant's name

- **Proof of South Carolina Residency**

To prove you are a resident of South Carolina, you must provide documentation that contains both your name and physical address. The following documents will be accepted:

- School Records must be from a SC school and for the current or prior school year.
 - Student ID
 - Report card
 - Letter or contract from Home Schooling Association
 - Official letter from individual's school or school district on school or district letterhead
 - Certified Transcript
 - Diploma from SC school (child has graduated within the last school year)
 - Out-of-state or in-state tuition bill with applicant's SC physical address
- Current Employment records (no more than 90 days old)
Records must be from a SC employer or have a SC address for the applicant on records from an out of state employer.
 - Letter on employer letterhead
 - Pay stub showing SC withholdings
 - Letter on employer letterhead indicating intent to hire
- Current utility bill (no more than 90 days old)
A utility bill is a bill specific to services for your residence. Examples include electric, water, sewer, cable and satellite. Cell phone bills are not acceptable.
- SC Welfare/Social Services Card
- SC Medicaid cards
- Parolee Cards or letter from parole officer (no more than 90

days old)

- Mortgage documents (no more than 90 days old)
- Current Weapons Permit
- County tax notice or property receipt for home or vehicle
- State or Federal Tax records
 - Income tax returns for current or prior year are acceptable including electronic tax file or W2.
 - If applicant is listed as a dependent on SC tax return presented as proof of residency, proof applies to the dependent also.
- Current Military Orders detailing active duty assignment in SC (no more than 90 days old)
- Current letter from Military Base with the Commander verifying duty station in SC
- Bank statement or letter showing name of applicant and SC physical address (no more than 90 days old)
- Original social security check showing name and SC physical address of applicant (no more than 90 days old)
- Insurance documentation (no more than 90 days old)
 - Letter from insurance company or agent licensed to do business in South Carolina stating the name of the applicant and indicating the SC address of the applicant
 - Insurance policy, showing name of applicant and SC address
- Letter from director of a social welfare institution (homeless shelter, battered women's shelter, halfway house, group home, orphanage, etc.) stating applicant is a resident of the facility (no more than 90 days old)
- SC Voter Registration
- Vehicle Insurance Card (only if the SC address and applicant's name appear on card)
- Article of mail with official Post Office address change label
- Unwritten or cancelled personal check with applicant's name and SC physical address
- Vehicle registration card

- **Insurance Information**

Before a license can be issued or renewed, you must provide current insurance information. You must provide the company name, policy number and telephone number of your automobile insurance company. If you or any relative in your household does not own a vehicle, you must indicate that fact on your application.

Applicants Under 18 Years of Age

If you are under 18 years of age, you must have a parent or legal guardian sign your application to accept responsibility for you. If you are an emancipated minor, you must submit proof of emancipation with a court order, marriage certificate or active military orders and have a responsible adult sign for you. Only an original document or a certified copy will be accepted.

United States Citizens with Credentials from Other States

If you are a new resident in South Carolina, you must meet the same requirements and provide the same documents as any other United States citizen. In addition, you must surrender your out-of-state driver's license. If you have lost your out-of-state beginner's permit, driver's license or identification card, you must also complete an affidavit of lost permit or license along with your South Carolina application.

Applicants with a Valid License from Another State

If you have a valid driver's license from another state, you may obtain a South Carolina driver's license by passing the vision test and surrendering your out-of-state driver's license. If your out-of-state driver's license has expired by nine months or more, you must also successfully complete the knowledge and skills tests. You must also provide the following documents:

1. Birth Certificate or acceptable substitute
2. Social Security Card or acceptable substitute
3. Proof of Residency
4. Insurance Information



A driver's license from another state is valid for 90 days. Then, you must qualify for a South Carolina license.

Applicants with a Valid Beginner's Permit from Another State

Beginner's permits issued in other states cannot be used to drive in South Carolina. To drive on South Carolina roads and highways, you must have a South Carolina beginner's permit. If you have had your out-of-state beginner's permit for at least 180 days, you may take the skills test to apply for your South Carolina driver's license. If you fail the skills test, you may return the next day and try again unless the driver license examiner recommends that you wait until you have had more practice. If you have had your out-of-state beginner's permit for less than 180 days, the time that you held your out-of-state permit will count toward the 180 day period. If you are issued a SC beginner's permit, you must hold it for 180 days before you can apply for a driver's license.

Applicants from Other Countries

All persons authorized by the U.S. Department of Justice, the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, or the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to live, work or study in the United States on a temporary or permanent basis will be eligible to apply for a beginner's permit, driver's license or identification card. The expiration date of your driver's license will be determined by your authorized period to stay in the United States or the expiration date of your employment authorization document.

Applications for beginner's permits, driver's licenses and identification cards for international customers are accepted at designated SCDMV offices throughout the state. To find the office location nearest you that accepts international customer applications, see the "Finding Your Local DMV" section of this manual on page 167 or visit our website at www.scdmvonline.com.

If you are an international customer, you must provide the following to apply for a South Carolina credential:

- Proof of identity
- Proof of birthplace
- Proof of residency
- Social Security Card or Letter from the Social Security Administration stating that the applicant is not allowed to work in the United States
- Automobile insurance information (if applying for a license)

All applicants must provide proper documentation to prove that the US Department of Justice, Department of Homeland Security or the US Citizenship and Immigration Services authorizes them to live, work or study in the United States on a temporary or permanent basis, and that they are within their current authorized period of stay. The documentation required by these agencies may vary. For the most up-

to-date information for SCDMV requirements, please visit our website at www.scdmvonline.com or call SCDMV at (803) 896-5000.

If you are applying for a driver's license, you must also submit a valid driver's license from your country of origin as proof of prior driving experience. If your out-of-country license has expired for more than nine months, you will have to take the knowledge and road tests. The driver's license information must be translated into English or be accompanied by an International Driving Permit. If you cannot show proof of prior driving experience, you must first obtain a beginner's permit and hold it for 180 days before applying for a driver's license.

To renew or replace your South Carolina credential, you must submit the same documentation that you used when you obtained your first time driver's license or identification card.

Drivers from other countries may obtain a South Carolina driver's license without taking a test other than the vision test if South Carolina has reciprocity with their home country. Reciprocity can only provide proof of previous driving experience. Canada has reciprocity with South Carolina for both commercial and noncommercial vehicles. The following countries have reciprocity with South Carolina for noncommercial vehicles: France, Germany, American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands and the Republic of Palau for regular driver licenses only. Mexico has reciprocity only for commercial vehicles with a CDLIS connection.

Applicants from countries without reciprocity must take the complete test. Drivers will be allowed to keep the out-of-country license but the use of the out-of-country license may result in the South Carolina license being revoked. If the out-of-country license has expired, the applicant must successfully complete the vision, knowledge, and skills tests.

Medical Reports

Should you have a medical condition, the Department may require medical reports prior to renewing or issuing a driver's license or permit.

Identification Cards

Identification cards are issued to residents who are at least five years of age. For United States citizens, the card expires five years after the issue date. For non-United States citizens, the card expires at the end of the applicant's authorized period of stay in the United States or the expiration date on the employment authorization document. The same documentation used when obtaining a first-time driver's license or beginner's permit is required when obtaining an I.D. card.

Change of Address or Name

Once you have obtained your license to drive, you will want to make certain that it is kept current. SCDMV must always be notified, within 10 days of any name or address changes. There are a number of reasons the Department may need to contact you, including matters that affect your driver's license or registration. The fact that you did not change your address and did not receive a letter will not be valid excuses for noncompliance with requirements.

Destroyed Or Lost License

If you lose your license or it is destroyed or becomes illegible, you may get a replacement for a fee at your local licensing office. However, you must furnish the proper identification and documents before a replacement driver's license can be issued.

Here are some things you can do to protect yourself in case your license is lost or stolen:

1. Make a record of your driver's license number and your car registration number, and keep those records in a safe place away from your wallet or wherever you keep your license and other papers. A photostat copy of these could prove quite valuable should your license be lost.



If your license is lost, destroyed or damaged so that it can not be read, you must get a replacement at your local licensing office.

2. A stolen license should be reported to the local police. However, no action is taken by the Department when the driver's license is reported stolen unless we have reason to suspect fraudulent use of this license. For a replacement license, you must present identification and pay the required fee. If you have your number, the process will be shortened.

Motor Voter Law

If you are a United States citizens and 18 years of age or older, you may register to vote when you have a driver's license issued or renewed. Your registration application will be forwarded to the registrar in your county of residence. You must present acceptable proof of your social security number.

Fraudulent Documents

Anyone who obtains a beginner's permit, driver's license or an identification card using fraudulent information will be prosecuted and the documents they were issued will be canceled.

