

Facts and Information

Driver's License

All new residents who plan to drive must obtain an N.C. driver's license within 60 days of establishing a permanent residence. Most newcomers, unless they drive commercial vehicles, will want a Class C license, which permits operation of personal cars and small trucks. If you drive a motorcycle, you'll also need a motorcycle endorsement. Licensed drivers who are 16 or 17 years old must present proof of completion of a state-approved driver education course in their former state; otherwise, they receive a temporary license pending completion of the course here.

N.C. driver's licenses are good for up to five years. To get a license, apply in person at a driver's license office and take the vision, sign recognition and written tests. (It'll help to study the "Driver's Handbook," available at DMV offices or check the website below.) Tests are available in seven languages – English, Korean, Chinese, Vietnamese, Spanish, French and Arabic.

When you apply, present your current out-of-state license or two other accepted forms of ID, as well as proof of liability insurance (for example, the original policy, original binder or Form DL-123 from your insurance agent) from an insurer licensed in North Carolina. You'll also need to supply your Social Security number.

The cost of a license will depend on how many years the license is good for. A Class C license costs \$2.50 per year. You must pass a road skills test on your motorcycle to receive the motorcycle endorsement.

For more information on N.C. driver's license and motor vehicle registration rules, call DMV at 919-715-7000. You can access recorded information 24 hours a day using a touch-tone telephone. Or check the DMV Web site (www.dmv.dot.state.nc.us).

North Carolina Driver's License Offices

8446 N. Tryon St., Charlotte 704-547-5786

6016 Brookshire Blvd., Charlotte 704-392-3266

2192 Kannapolis Highway, Concord 704-782-7214

905 Carolina Ave. N., Statesville 704-878-4220

533 Patterson Ave., Suite 100, Mooresville 704-664-3344

1450 N. Aspen St., Lincolnton 704-735-6923

1033 Smyre Farm Road, Newton 828-466-5516

Motor Vehicle Registration

You must register your vehicle before the reciprocity agreement between North Carolina and your former state expires (usually 30 days). Registration is renewed annually.

To register your vehicle, apply in person at a license plate agency and present your title (unless title is held by a lien holder) and a valid registration card from your former state. If your title is held by a lien holder, you must provide

the lien holder's name and address on a state form for title release. You also must present proof of vehicle liability insurance at or above minimum standards (see driver's license information for the list of acceptable documents).

Payment due when you receive N.C. registration includes title fee, \$35; registration fee, \$20; and highway use tax, which is 3 percent of the value of your vehicle.

You also must get a vehicle safety inspection within 10 days of receiving your N.C. license plate. This costs \$9.25 and can be done at any state-authorized inspection station. Inspection is required annually. Some counties also require an emissions inspection, which is conducted at the same time as the safety inspection and costs \$30.

Although the state does not levy sales tax on motor vehicles, N.C. counties assess property taxes annually. Your car will be registered when you receive your license plate, and you'll receive a bill in about three months.

North Carolina Motor Vehicle Registration Offices

6016 Brookshire Blvd., Charlotte

704-399-8306

121 W. Water St., Statesville

704-873-3185

125-3 N. Main St., Mooresville

704-663-5472

759 Church St. N., Concord

704-788-1404

Rules of the Road

- Speed limits range from 55 mph to 70 mph on interstates and from 55 mph to 65 mph on open highways; the limit is 35 mph inside municipal corporate limits unless otherwise posted.
- Motorcyclists must wear helmets and drive with lights on at all times.
- Seat belt use is mandatory for driver and front-seat passengers. Approved child-restraint seats are required for children 4 years and younger or under 50 pounds; all children 16 and younger must be buckled up no matter where they sit in the vehicle.
- Right turn on red is permitted after complete stop unless otherwise posted. Left turn on red is not permitted.
- Drunken-driving rules are strict. A motorist is guilty of driving while impaired (DWI) if his blood alcohol level meets or exceeds 0.08 percent or if he is under the influence of or affected by alcohol and/or other drugs. Penalties can include fines, imprisonment and license revocation. The best rule: Don't drink and drive.