

CHAPTER 401  
SPECIAL REGISTRATION PLATES

**761—401.1(321) Definition.** “Special registration plates” means those registration plates issued under Iowa Code sections 321.34 and 321.105 other than regular or sample plates. Special registration plates shall be issued in accordance with Iowa Code sections 321.34 and 321.105, this chapter of rules, and other applicable provisions of law.

**761—401.2(321) Application, issuance and renewal.**

**401.2(1) Original application.**

*a.* Except for collegiate plates, application for letter-number designated special registration plates that do not have eligibility requirements shall be made directly to the county treasurer’s office; no application form is required for these plates.

*b.* Collegiate plates, personalized plates, and special registration plates that have eligibility requirements must be requested using an application form prescribed by the department. Unless otherwise specified, completed application forms for these plates shall be submitted to the department at the following address: Office of Vehicle and Motor Carrier Services, Iowa Department of Transportation, P.O. Box 9278, Des Moines, Iowa 50306-9278. Application forms may be obtained from the office of vehicle and motor carrier services or from any county treasurer’s office. Application forms are also available on the department’s website at [www.iowadot.gov](http://www.iowadot.gov).

*c.* The issuance fee, if any, shall be submitted with the application.

**401.2(2) Issuance.**

*a.* Special registration plates shall be issued only to a person who is an owner or lessee of the vehicle and is entitled to the special registration plates.

*b.* Special registration plates shall not be issued unless the vehicle is currently registered and the registration plates previously issued are surrendered to the county treasurer. Special registration plates are void if they are not assigned to a vehicle within 90 days after the date the department orders them. A new application and a new issuance fee are required if the plates are reordered after the 90-day period.

*c.* and *d.* Rescinded IAB 11/7/07, effective 12/12/07.

**401.2(3) Renewal.** Special registration plates are renewed at the office of the county treasurer of the county of residence of the applicant. The renewal fee, if any, is termed a “validation” fee. The validation fee shall be paid when the regular annual registration fee is due and is in addition to the regular annual registration fee. If renewal is delinquent for more than one month:

*a.* A new application and a new issuance fee are required.

*b.* The department may issue the combination of characters on personalized plates to another applicant.

**401.2(4) Fees.** The issuance and validation fees for the various types of special registration plates that are available are set out in Iowa Code section 321.34.

[ARC 9048B, IAB 9/8/10, effective 10/13/10; ARC 3935C, IAB 8/1/18, effective 9/5/18]

**761—401.3** Reserved.

**761—401.4(321) Gift certificates.** Gift certificates for collegiate plates, personalized plates, and special registration plates that have eligibility requirements may be purchased using the prescribed plate application form. Gift certificates for special registration plates that counties have in their inventories may be purchased from county treasurers’ offices.

**761—401.5(321) Amateur radio call letter plates.** Application for amateur radio call letter plates shall be made to the county treasurer on a form prescribed by the department. The number of the amateur radio license issued by the Federal Communications Commission shall be listed on the application.

**761—401.6(321) Personalized plates.**

**401.6(1) Application.** Application for personalized plates shall be submitted to the department on a form prescribed by the department.

**401.6(2) Characters.** The personalized plates shall consist of no fewer than two nor more than seven characters except that personalized plates for motorcycles, autocycles and small trailers shall consist of no fewer than two nor more than six characters.

*a.* The characters “A” to “Z” and “1” to “9” may be used. Zeros shall not be used.

*b.* The personalized plates shall not duplicate combinations of characters reserved or issued for any other vehicle plate series under Iowa Code chapter 321.

*c.* No combination of characters denoting a governmental agency shall be issued.

*d.* The department shall not issue any combination of characters it determines is:

- (1) Sexual in connotation;
- (2) A term of vulgarity, contempt, prejudice, hostility, insult, or racial or ethnic degradation;
- (3) Recognized as a swear word;
- (4) A reference to an illegal substance;
- (5) A reference to a criminal act;
- (6) Offensive; or
- (7) A foreign word falling into any of these categories.

**401.6(3) Renewal.** Rescinded IAB 11/23/05, effective 12/28/05.

**401.6(4) Reassignment.** Rescinded IAB 11/23/05, effective 12/28/05.

**401.6(5) Gift certificate.** Rescinded IAB 11/23/05, effective 12/28/05.

[ARC 2985C, IAB 3/15/17, effective 4/19/17]

**761—401.7(321) Collegiate plates.**

**401.7(1) Application.** Application for collegiate plates shall be submitted to the department on a form prescribed by the department. The applicant may request letter-number designated collegiate plates or personalized collegiate plates. Collegiate plates for motorcycles, autocycles and small trailers are not available.

**401.7(2) Characters.** Personalized collegiate plates shall be issued in accordance with subrule 401.6(2) except that personalized collegiate plates are not available for motorcycles, autocycles and small trailers.

**401.7(3) Renewal.** Rescinded IAB 11/23/05, effective 12/28/05.

**401.7(4) Reassignment.** Rescinded IAB 11/23/05, effective 12/28/05.

**401.7(5) Gift certificate.** Rescinded IAB 11/23/05, effective 12/28/05.

[ARC 2985C, IAB 3/15/17, effective 4/19/17]

**761—401.8(321) Medal of Honor plates.**

**401.8(1) Application.** Application for Medal of Honor plates shall be submitted to the department on a form prescribed by the department. The applicant shall attach a copy of the official government document verifying receipt of the medal of honor.

**401.8(2) Medal of Honor plates are limited to five characters.** Personalized plates are not available.

**761—401.9(321) Firefighter plates.**

**401.9(1) Initial application for firefighter plates.** Application for firefighter plates shall be submitted to the department on a form prescribed by the department. Both the fire chief and another fire officer of the paid or volunteer fire department shall sign the application form, certifying that the applicant is a current or retired member of the fire department. The signatures must be original and notarized. If the fire chief and fire officer deny an application, the department may conduct an investigation and make a determination to approve or deny the application.

**401.9(2) Renewal of firefighter plates for a current member.** A new application is required in order to renew firefighter plates issued to a current member. The application shall be submitted to the county treasurer’s office.

**401.9(3) Renewal of firefighter plates for a retired member.**

a. A new application is not required in order to renew firefighter plates issued to a retired member if the initial application for firefighter plates is made after January 1, 2005.

b. For firefighter plates issued to a retired member prior to January 1, 2005, a new application is required in order to renew firefighter plates until the plates have been renewed once after January 1, 2005. The application shall be submitted to the county treasurer's office.

**401.9(4) Plates.** Firefighter plates are limited to five characters. Personalized plates are not available. When a new series of firefighter plates is issued to replace a current series or the plate has been lost, stolen, or damaged, an applicant may obtain replacement plates containing the applicant's previous plate number upon payment of the statutory fee.

**401.9(5) Definitions.** The following definitions apply to this rule:

"*Current*" means a member who has at least one year of service and is in good standing, as determined by the fire chief.

"*Fire officer*" means a member of the same fire department as the applicant and who is second in command to the fire chief.

"*Retired*" or "*officially retired*" means a former member who has a minimum of ten years' total service in good standing, as determined by the fire chief.

[ARC 0778C, IAB 6/12/13, effective 7/17/13]

#### **761—401.10(321) Emergency medical services plates.**

**401.10(1)** Application for emergency medical services (EMS) plates shall be submitted to the department on a form prescribed by the department. The applicant and the applicant's service director shall sign the application form certifying that the applicant is a current member of a paid or volunteer emergency medical services agency. For purposes of this subrule, "service director" means a service director as defined in Iowa department of public health rule 641—132.1(147A).

**401.10(2)** A vehicle owner whose membership in a paid or volunteer emergency medical services agency is terminated shall within 30 days after termination surrender the EMS plates to the county treasurer in exchange for regular registration plates.

**401.10(3)** EMS plates are limited to five characters. Personalized plates are not available. When a new series of EMS plates is issued to replace a current series or the plate has been lost, stolen, or damaged, an applicant may obtain replacement plates containing the applicant's previous plate number upon payment of the statutory fee.

[ARC 0136C, IAB 5/30/12, effective 7/4/12; ARC 0778C, IAB 6/12/13, effective 7/17/13; ARC 3935C, IAB 8/1/18, effective 9/5/18]

**761—401.11(321) Natural resources plates.** Letter-number designated natural resources plates are limited to five characters. Personalized natural resources plates shall consist of no less than two nor more than five characters and shall be issued in accordance with subrule 401.6(2), paragraphs "a" to "d."

**761—401.12(321) Natural resources plates—personalized.** Rescinded IAB 11/23/05, effective 12/28/05.

#### **761—401.13(321) Disabled veteran plates.**

**401.13(1)** Disabled veteran plates are issued in accordance with Iowa Code sections 321.34, 321.105 and 321.166.

**401.13(2)** To apply for disabled veteran plates for a motor vehicle, the disabled veteran shall submit to the county treasurer a certification from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs that the United States government has provided or has assisted in providing the motor vehicle to the disabled veteran. The certification is required when the motor vehicle is first registered. Another certification may be required for the first registration of a newly acquired vehicle or when the veteran moves to another county.

**401.13(3)** The disabled veteran plates shall be surrendered to the county treasurer in exchange for regular registration plates within 30 days after the death of the disabled veteran. The motor vehicle to which the plates are assigned shall become subject to the payment of regular registration fees on the first

day of the month following the death of the disabled veteran. The registration fees shall be prorated for the remaining unexpired months of the registration year.

**761—401.14** Reserved.

**761—401.15(17A,321) Nonprofit organization decal.** The following shall apply to all applications for an organization decal under Iowa Code section 321.34(13).

**401.15(1)** Application to request a new decal shall be submitted to the department on Form 411346. The application shall be subject to the requirements in Iowa Code section 321.34(13) and shall include all of the information and documentation required by Iowa Code section 321.34(13) “c.” An organization applying for approval of a decal shall meet the criteria set forth in Iowa Code section 321.34(13) “b”(1). A group of organizations applying for approval of a decal must have a common purpose as required by Iowa Code section 321.34(13) “b”(2), and each organization within the group must meet the criteria set forth in Iowa Code section 321.34(13) “b”(1).

**401.15(2)** The proposed decal shall be designed to be placed in the space reserved for the placement of an organization decal and shall be limited to dimensions of 2.875” in width and 3” in height. As required by Iowa Code section 321.34(13) “d,” the proposed decal design shall not:

- a. Promote a specific religion, faith or anti-religious sentiment.
- b. Have any sexual connotation.
- c. Be vulgar, prejudiced, hostile, insulting, or racially or ethnically degrading.

**401.15(3)** The office of vehicle and motor carrier services may consult with other organizations, law enforcement authorities, and the general public concerning the decal design.

**401.15(4)** Within 60 days after receiving the application, the office of vehicle and motor carrier services shall advise the organization of the department’s approval or denial of the application. The department reserves the right to approve or disapprove any decal design.

**401.15(5)** If the decal is approved and at a later date it is determined that a false application was submitted, or a violation of Iowa Code section 321.34(13) or this chapter occurred, the department shall revoke the decal and the organization shall no longer issue the decal.

**401.15(6)** If the department denies or revokes the decal design, the department shall send notice of the denial or revocation by certified mail to the organization at the address listed on the application. The revocation or denial shall become effective 20 days from the date of mailing. The organization may contest the decision of the department in accordance with 761—Chapter 13. The request shall be deemed timely if it is delivered or postmarked on or before the effective date specified in the notice.

[ARC 9048B, IAB 9/8/10, effective 10/13/10; ARC 3935C, IAB 8/1/18, effective 9/5/18]

**761—401.16(17A,321) Special plates with space reserved for a nonprofit organization decal.**

**401.16(1)** Application for special plates with space reserved for an organization decal shall be subject to the requirements in Iowa Code section 321.34(13).

**401.16(2)** A person shall obtain the decal to display on the special registration plate from an organization approved by the department. A person shall not display a decal on a vehicle registration plate other than a decal approved by the department. An approved decal shall only be affixed to and displayed in the space reserved for placement of the organization decal on the registration plate.

**401.16(3)** Personalized special plates with space reserved for an organization decal shall be limited to no more than five initials, letters, or combinations of numerals and letters.

[ARC 3935C, IAB 8/1/18, effective 9/5/18]

**761—401.17(321) State agency-sponsored processed emblem plates.** Rescinded ARC 3935C, IAB 8/1/18, effective 9/5/18.

**761—401.18(321) Combat infantryman badge, combat action badge, combat action ribbon, air force combat action medal, combat medical badge, fallen peace officers and civil war sesquicentennial plates.** Following is the application and approval process for special plate requests under Iowa Code section 321.34(20C).

**401.18(1) Design.**

a. The plates shall be a standard background plate with a distinguishing processed emblem specific to each plate type.

b. The distinguishing processed emblem shall be limited to 2.875" × 3" on the registration plate.

c. A distinguishing processed emblem owned or subject to legal rights of another person will not be used unless the department receives certification from the person that allows use of the emblem. The certification must include a statement holding the department harmless for using the emblem on a registration plate.

d. The office of vehicle and motor carrier services may consult with other organizations, law enforcement authorities, and the general public concerning distinguishing processed emblems.

**401.18(2) Production.** None of the special registration plates subject to this rule will be manufactured or issued until 250 paid applications are submitted to the department. This minimum order requirement applies to each of the special registration plates subject to this rule. Each application must be accompanied by a statutory start-up fee.

**401.18(3) Discontinuance.** If 250 paid applications for any special registration plate subject to this rule are not submitted within one year after the date the department makes the plate available for application, the department shall report that fact to the legislature at the next regular session of the general assembly and request authority to discontinue the special registration plate.

**401.18(4) Application process.**

a. Applications for either letter-number designated or personalized combat infantryman badge, combat action badge, combat action ribbon, air force combat action medal, or combat medical badge special registration plates shall be submitted to the department on a form prescribed by the department. The applicant shall attach to the application a copy of an official government document verifying award of the combat infantryman badge, combat action badge, combat action ribbon, air force combat action medal or combat medical badge to the applicant.

b. Applications for letter-number designated civil war sesquicentennial or fallen peace officers special registration plates shall be submitted to the county treasurer.

c. Applications for personalized civil war sesquicentennial or fallen peace officers special registration plates shall be submitted to the department on a form prescribed by the department.

**401.18(5) Characters.** Plates are limited to five characters. Personalized plates shall consist of no less than two nor more than five characters and shall be issued in accordance with subrule 401.6(2), paragraphs "a" to "d."

**401.18(6) Right of approval.** The department reserves the right to approve or disapprove any application.

[ARC 9833B, IAB 11/2/11, effective 12/7/11; ARC 3935C, IAB 8/1/18, effective 9/5/18]

**761—401.19(321) Legion of Merit plates.** Application for special plates with a Legion of Merit processed emblem shall be submitted to the department on a form prescribed by the department. The applicant shall attach a copy of the official government document verifying receipt of the Legion of Merit. Personalized plates with a Legion of Merit processed emblem are not available. Pursuant to Iowa Code section 321.34, an applicant is eligible for one set of Legion of Merit plates at a reduced annual registration fee of \$15 for one vehicle owned. However, an applicant may obtain additional Legion of Merit plates upon payment of the regular annual registration fee.

[ARC 9048B, IAB 9/8/10, effective 10/13/10]

**761—401.20(321) Persons with disabilities plates.**

**401.20(1) Application.** Application for special plates with a persons with disabilities processed emblem shall be submitted to the county treasurer on a form prescribed by the department.

a. The application shall comply with the requirements of 761—subrule 411.3(2) and shall certify that the owner or the owner's child is a person with a disability, as defined in Iowa Code section 321L.1, and that the disability is permanent.

b. If the person with a disability is a child, the parent or guardian shall complete the proof of residency certification on the application or complete and submit a separate proof of residency Form 411120, certifying that the child resides with the owner.

c. In lieu of submitting the statement of disability required in 761—subrule 411.3(2), an individual who is eligible for disabled veteran plates but has not been issued them may submit certification from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs that the United States government has provided or assisted in providing a motor vehicle to the individual.

**401.20(2) Definition.**

“Child” includes, but is not limited to, stepchild, foster child, or legally adopted child who is younger than 18 years of age, or a dependent person 18 years of age or older who is unable to maintain the person’s self.

**401.20(3) Renewal.** The owner shall, at renewal time, submit a persons with disabilities parking permit application pursuant to rule 761—411.3(321L) that includes all required documentation and shows the owner or the owner’s child remains permanently disabled and has a continuing need for the plates.

[ARC 0136C, IAB 5/30/12, effective 7/4/12; ARC 3450C, IAB 11/8/17, effective 12/13/17]

**761—401.21(321) Ex-prisoner of war plates.**

**401.21(1)** Application for special plates with an ex-prisoner of war processed emblem shall be submitted to the department on a form prescribed by the department. The applicant shall attach a copy of an official government document verifying that the applicant was a prisoner of war. If the document is not available, a person who has knowledge that the applicant was a prisoner of war shall sign a statement to that effect on the application form.

**401.21(2)** The surviving spouse of a person who was issued ex-prisoner of war plates may continue to use or apply for the plates. If the surviving spouse remarries, the surviving spouse shall surrender the plates to the county treasurer in exchange for regular registration plates within 30 days after the date on the marriage certificate. Ex-prisoner of war plates may not be reissued once this event occurs.

**401.21(3)** Personalized plates with an ex-prisoner of war processed emblem are not available.

**761—401.22(321) National guard plates.** Application for special plates with a national guard processed emblem shall be submitted to the department on a form prescribed by the department. The unit commander of the applicant shall sign the application form confirming that the applicant is a member of the Iowa national guard.

**761—401.23(321) Pearl Harbor plates.** Application for special plates with a Pearl Harbor processed emblem shall be submitted to the department on a form prescribed by the department. The applicant shall attach a copy of an official government document verifying that the applicant was stationed at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, as a member of the armed forces on December 7, 1941.

**761—401.24(321) Purple Heart, Silver Star and Bronze Star plates.** Application for special plates with a Purple Heart, Silver Star, or Bronze Star processed emblem shall be submitted to the department on a form prescribed by the department. To verify receipt of the medal, the applicant shall attach a copy of one of the following:

1. The official military order confirming the medal.
2. The report of discharge or federal Form DD214.
3. Other documentation approved by the Iowa office of the adjutant general.

**761—401.25(321) U.S. armed forces retired plates.** Application for special plates with a United States armed forces retired processed emblem shall be submitted to the department on a form prescribed by the department. A person is considered to be retired if the person is recognized by the United States armed forces as retired from the United States armed forces. To verify retirement from the United States armed forces, the applicant shall attach a copy of one of the following:

1. The official military order confirming retirement from the armed forces.

2. The report of discharge or federal Form DD214.
3. Other documentation approved by the Iowa office of the adjutant general.

**761—401.26** Reserved.

**761—401.27(321) Iowa heritage plates.** Rescinded IAB 11/23/05, effective 12/28/05.

**761—401.28(321) Education plates.** Rescinded IAB 11/23/05, effective 12/28/05.

**761—401.29(321) Love our kids plates.** Rescinded IAB 11/23/05, effective 12/28/05.

**761—401.30(321) Motorcycle rider education plates.** Rescinded IAB 11/23/05, effective 12/28/05.

**761—401.31(321) Veteran plates.** Application for special plates with a veteran processed emblem shall be submitted to the commission of veterans affairs on a form prescribed by the department of transportation. The commission of veterans affairs shall determine whether the applicant is a veteran and, if so, certify this fact on the application form.

**761—401.32(321) Surrender of plates.** Special registration plates issued to a person who is no longer eligible for the plates shall be surrendered to the county treasurer in exchange for regular registration plates within 30 days after the date of the event that made the person ineligible. If the vehicle was exempt from the payment of regular registration fees due to the type of special registration plates issued, the vehicle shall become subject to the payment of regular registration fees on the first day of the month following the date of the event that made the person ineligible. The regular registration fees shall be prorated for the remaining unexpired months of the registration year.

**761—401.33(321) Validation fees.** Validation fees shall not be prorated. The annual validation fee is due when there is a change in registration month.

**761—401.34(321) Reassignment of plates.**

**401.34(1)** A vehicle owner or lessee who has special registration plates assigned to a currently registered vehicle may request that the plates be reassigned to another currently registered vehicle owned or leased by that person or owned or leased by another person. However, special registration plates that have eligibility requirements may not be reassigned to a vehicle owned or leased by another person.

**401.34(2)** To reassign plates to a vehicle owned or leased by another person, a written request for reassignment signed by both the assignor and assignee shall be submitted to the county treasurer of the assignee's county of residence. The special registration plates shall be issued to the assignee by the county treasurer of the assignee's county of residence in exchange for the registration plates previously issued.

**401.34(3)** When ownership of a vehicle is transferred to another person, the owner shall, within 30 days after the transfer, either surrender the special registration plates to the county treasurer or request reassignment of the plates, as explained in subrules 401.34(1) and 401.34(2).

**401.34(4)** When the lease for a vehicle is terminated, the lessee shall, within 30 days after the termination, either surrender the special registration plates to the county treasurer or request reassignment of the plates, as explained in subrules 401.34(1) and 401.34(2).

**761—401.35(321) Revocation of special registration plates—appeal.**

**401.35(1)** Special registration plates shall be revoked if they have been issued in conflict with the statutes or rules governing the plates' issuance. Revoked plates shall be surrendered to the department within 30 days of the date of revocation.

**401.35(2)** The department shall send the notice of revocation to a person's mailing address by certified mail, and the revocation shall become effective 20 days from the date of mailing. The person

may contest the decision of the department in accordance with 761—Chapter 13. The request shall be deemed timely if it is delivered or postmarked on or before the effective date specified in the notice.  
[ARC 3935C, IAB 8/1/18, effective 9/5/18]

**761—401.36(321) Refund of fees.** No refund of fees for special registration plates shall be allowed unless the special plates were issued in conflict with the statutes or rules governing their issuance.

These rules are intended to implement Iowa Code sections 35A.11, 321.34, 321.105, 321.166 and 321L.1 and chapter 17A.

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