

**321.166 Vehicle plate specifications.**

Vehicle registration plates shall conform to the following specifications:

1. *a.* Registration plates shall be of metal and of a size not to exceed six inches by twelve inches, except that the size of plates issued for use on autocycles, motorized bicycles, motorcycles, motorcycle trailers, and trailers with an empty weight of two thousand pounds or less shall be established by the department.

*b.* Trailers with empty weights of two thousand pounds or less may, upon request, be licensed with regular-sized license plates.

2. Every registration plate or pair of plates shall display a registration plate number which shall consist of alphabetical or numerical characters or a combination thereof and the name of this state, which may be abbreviated. Every registration plate issued by the county treasurer shall display the name of the county, including any plate issued pursuant to [section 321.34](#), except Pearl Harbor and purple heart registration plates issued prior to January 1, 1997; and collegiate, fire fighter, and medal of honor registration plates. Special truck registration plates shall display the word “special”. The department may adopt rules to implement [this subsection](#).

3. The registration plate number shall be displayed in characters which shall not exceed a height of four inches nor a stroke width exceeding five-eighths of an inch. Special plates issued to dealers shall display the alphabetical character “D”, which shall be of the same size as the characters in the registration plate. The registration plate number issued for autocycles, motorized bicycles, motorcycles, trailers with an empty weight of two thousand pounds or less, and motorcycle trailers shall be a size prescribed by the department.

4. The registration plate number, except on autocycles, motorized bicycles, motorcycles, motorcycle trailers, and trailers with an empty weight of two thousand pounds or less, shall be of sufficient size to be readable from a distance of one hundred feet during daylight.

5. There shall be a marked contrast between the color of the registration plates and the data which is required to be displayed on the registration plates. When a new series of registration plates is issued to replace a current series, the new registration plates shall be of a distinctively different color from the series which is replaced, except for collegiate registration plates issued under [section 321.34, subsection 7 or 7A](#).

6. Registration plates issued to a disabled veteran under the provisions of [section 321.105](#) shall display the alphabetical characters “DV” which shall precede the registration plate number. The plates may also display a persons with disabilities parking sticker if issued to the disabled veteran by the department under [section 321L.2](#).

7. The year and month of expiration of registration, which may be abbreviated, shall be displayed on vehicle registration plates issued by the county treasurer. A distinctive emblem or validation sticker may be prescribed by the department to designate the year and month of expiration. The year and month of expiration shall not be required to be displayed on plates issued under [section 321.19](#).

8. The owner of a trailer with an empty weight of two thousand pounds or less shall receive registration plates for the trailer smaller than plates regularly issued for automobiles pursuant to rules adopted by the department in accordance with [this section](#) unless the owner requests regular-sized plates.

9. Special registration plates issued pursuant to [section 321.34](#), other than gold star, medal of honor, collegiate, fire fighter, natural resources, blackout, and flying our colors registration plates, shall be consistent with the design and color of regular registration plates but shall provide a space on a portion of the plate for the purpose of allowing the placement of a distinguishing processed emblem or an organization decal. Special registration plates shall also comply with the requirements for regular registration plates as provided in [this section](#) to the extent the requirements are consistent with the section authorizing a particular special vehicle registration plate.

10. If the department reissues a new registration plate design for a special registration

plate under [section 321.34](#), all persons who have purchased or obtained the special registration plates shall not be required to pay the issuance fee.

[S13, §1571-m12, -m13; C24, 27, 31, 35, §4978; C39, §**5001.19, 5001.20, 5012.04**; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, §321.35, 321.36, 321.166; C79, 81, §321.166]

[82 Acts, ch 1032, §3, 4](#); [82 Acts, ch 1062, §28, 29, 36, 38](#); [83 Acts, ch 24, §7, 12](#); [86 Acts, ch 1225, §2](#); [88 Acts, ch 1215, §11](#); [89 Acts, ch 247, §5](#); [92 Acts, ch 1026, §1](#); [94 Acts, ch 1028, §1 – 4](#); [95 Acts, ch 118, §20, 40](#); [96 Acts, ch 1088, §5, 6](#); [96 Acts, ch 1152, §7, 8](#); [96 Acts, ch 1171, §3](#); [96 Acts, ch 1219, §25](#); [97 Acts, ch 70, §4](#); [97 Acts, ch 104, §14, 15](#); [99 Acts, ch 13, §10, 29](#); [2007 Acts, ch 184, §6, 7](#); [2008 Acts, ch 1124, §7](#); [2009 Acts, ch 130, §25, 26](#); [2010 Acts, ch 1061, §52, 180](#); [2016 Acts, ch 1068, §2, 4](#); [2016 Acts, ch 1098, §17](#); [2019 Acts, ch 89, §36](#); [2020 Acts, ch 1118, §156](#); [2023 Acts, ch 66, §74](#)

Referred to in [§321L.1, 364.3](#)

Subsection 2 amended