

Replacement license plate issuance begins April 2

ANKENY, Iowa – March 29, 2012 – The Iowa Department of Transportation, in cooperation with Iowa's 99 county treasurers, will implement a 10-year license plate replacement cycle beginning April 2. The Iowa DOT is not implementing a new license plate design; the design of the replacement plates will be the same as the currently issued plates.

The Iowa DOT first issued the standard blue and white plates with the town and country landscape in 1997. In 1999, the embossed version of the plate was replaced by a flat plate, but the design did not change. This design remains within the recommended standards for license plate function and legibility, and the Iowa DOT plans to retain and use this design well into the future.

The Iowa DOT recognizes, however, that because Iowa has not conducted a plate reissue since 1997, there are plates in circulation that are reaching the end of their useful life and are faded, worn or damaged, making them difficult to read.

Rather than reissue all Iowa plates, as has been done in the past, the Iowa DOT is implementing a "rolling" replacement cycle replacing only those plates that have reached an age that is beyond the usual lifespan for a plate, with replacement to occur at the time of annual registration. This will replace plates that are too old, without wasting money by replacing plates that are not.

Under the replacement cycle, all currently issued license plates will be replaced over the course of the next 10 years, with the oldest plates being replaced first.

- 2012: Plates originally issued in 1996 and 1997 will be replaced.
- 2013: Plates originally issued in 1998 through 2003 will be replaced.
- 2014: Plates issued in 2004 will be replaced.
- After 2014: Plate replacement will be on a rolling 10-year cycle.

Specialty plates will be replaced with the current version of the same specialty plate. Personalized plates, whether standard or specialty, will be replaced with the same personalized alpha-numeric sequence. Specialty and standard plates that are not personalized will be replaced with a plate that has a new alpha-numeric sequence.

Annual registration renewal notices will inform customers if their plates are due for replacement. The plates will be issued along with the registration renewal, either in person at the local county treasurer's office or by mail. Customers can complete the renewal online and will receive the replacement plates by mail. There is no fee for the replacement plates, but customers receiving replacement plates by mail will pay a \$3 mailing fee per set of plates.

Customers will not be required to turn in their old plates to their county treasurer's office when they receive the new ones, but may do so if they wish. Customers that do not turn in their old plates are encouraged to recycle them.

Customers that wish to replace the plates for all of their vehicles at one time, rather than waiting for each set of plates to come due for renewal, may elect to do so, but must pay the usual \$5 replacement fee for each set of plates not currently due for replacement.

Although the plate design will not change, the current alpha-numeric sequence (three numbers followed by three letters) used on Iowa license plates will reach the maximum possible combination sometime later this summer. At that time, newly issued plates that are not personalized will use a reverse alpha-numeric sequence (three letters followed by three numbers).

The Iowa DOT has already changed the color of the alpha-numeric characters and other text on newly issued license plates from dark blue to black. This change affected only the standard plates and specialty plates that employ the blue and white background, and did not affect specialty plates that employ a special color for the alpha-numeric characters as part of their design, such as collegiate plates and firefighter plates.

Changing the characters to black increased the contrast with the background and made them easier to read, which is important to law enforcement. It also makes plate production more consistent and cost-effective.

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