

From the Office of the Sheriff: "License plate not necessarily proper registration"

The failure to display proper/expired license plates provide ample probable cause for law enforcement to conduct a traffic stop. Many of those stops are a basis to identify other violations such as arrest warrants for driver or passengers. It is equally important you display two plates if provided and each is legible and has no covers which obscure the plate. As always, ensure your plate lamp is operational.

The state requires both proper and current registration to legally operate upon our public roads and it is incumbent upon the registered owner to ensure the validity of each. Often the excuse is, "I never received the renewal notice." Of course not! You moved and failed to notify the Department of Transportation of your change of address. State Statute 341.335 requires you to notify DOT within ten days of moving, a name change, or marriage. Failure to do so is \$162.70.

There is also a misperception in regards to vehicles registered with farm plates. Vehicles with a gross weight of less than 38,000 pounds can be used for family and personal use if the "primary" use of the vehicle is for transporting supplies or equipment for the farm or for market. Those which exceed that weight can not be used for personal use. The agricultural trade also has the option of a dual purpose registration.

Many times vehicle owners register their trucks at a lower fee registration because the cost of registration is based upon "gross weight", which is the weight of the vehicle as well as its cargo. For those purchasing a pick-up truck, ensure you register your new truck and allow for the weight of cargo you may haul, i.e. dirt, gravel, or even a lawn tractor. Just because the manufacturers "gross vehicle weight rating" allows for such weight to be hauled, you may be in violation of your registration. The penalty is \$200.50.

Dealer plates can cause some confusion as well. A motor vehicle dealer may operate vehicles for private or business use as long as the vehicle is actually being offered for sale, is traveling from factory or distributor, is being trial tested, or is being repossessed, is for resale, or being reconditioned for resale.

For most of us, we get a month and year tag reflecting when our plates expire and you make sure you have your new tag on before the first of the month following your expiration. Recently, DOT has gone to a day of the month so your tag may reflect an expiration of October 2011 and your plates may actually expire October 3, 2011. So stay current, do not procrastinate and send your registration in when you receive the renewal, unless of course you moved without telling DOT, in which case you will not get your notice.

Lastly, many people find it convenient to remove plates from one vehicle and attach them to a newly acquired vehicle to reduce the potential of getting stopped for no plates. This is a bad idea. With mobile data computers, deputies are constantly running registration plates during routine patrol to ensure proper and current registrations. Should you be using an improper plate or tag it will cost you \$238.30. Thanks for listening, [tnehs@co.dodge.wi.us](mailto:tnehs@co.dodge.wi.us).

