

Motor Vehicle Division Informational Memo # 20-09 – revised

COVID-19 Six-Month License Extensions

DATE: December 18, 2020

FROM: Darcy Doty, director, Driver & Identification Services

TO: All DIS staff, Iowa County Treasurers and County Treasurers' staff that issue driver's licenses and non-operator's identification cards.

SUBJECT

This memo explains the policy of issuing six-month driver's license extensions as authorized in Iowa Code section 321.196(6), in order to provide relief for customers impacted by COVID-19.

EXPLANATION

To provide relief for customers with expired or expiring driver's licenses following the COVID-19 service disruptions and to spread out renewal transactions for customers whose license expired during Governor Reynolds' proclamation of disaster emergency, we are encouraging eligible customers to apply for an extension of their driver's license. The extension will enable customers to continue driving on their current license while they work to make a renewal appointment.

The six-month extension process is authorized in Iowa Code section 321.196(6) and is already in use, but will now be more broadly promoted. A six-month extension is issued in the form of a paper document that must be carried by the driver in conjunction with the expired driver's license. Applications (Iowa DOT form number [430027](#)) can be submitted online or printed and mailed or emailed, and will be processed by DIS staff. A **maximum of two consecutive six-month extensions** (or one twelve-month extension) can be given. The extension is added to the original license expiration date (e.g., a license that expired July 14, 2020 would be given a six-month extension until January 14, 2021). A customer can apply for the extension up to 90 days before, or within six-months after, their current license has expired, to extend the validity of their current license, and to allow them time to make a renewal appointment. **The six-month extension must be in the possession of the driver, along with the expired plastic license, in order to be valid for driving purposes.**

Who will this help? The extension process is intended to help customers who aren't eligible for online renewal, whose license expired during the effective dates of the driver's license expiration relief in the Governor's proclamation of disaster emergency (January 16, 2020 – January 8, 2021), or customers who are temporarily not able to come to a service center to renew their license due to lack of appointment availability or health concerns.

Particularly, some customers whose license expired during the relief period provided in the Governor's proclamation no longer have any time remaining in their statutory 60-day grace period and therefore, beginning on January 9, 2021 (upon the end of the Governor's proclamation) their license will be immediately invalid, pursuant to Iowa Code section 321.196(2). For more information about the Governor's proclamation, see MVD IM# 20-03.

Six-month/twelve-month extension example: Let's say a driver's license expired March 1, 2020, during the effective period of the Governor's proclamation relief for driver's licenses. The customer's statutory 60-day grace period was up April 30, 2020, but they remain valid to drive through January 8, 2021 due to the Governor's proclamation. However, beginning January 9, 2021 the customer is no longer valid to drive on that expired license. This customer can apply for a 6-month extension, and when our staff is processing it, they would issue two consecutive six-month extensions (because one 6-month extension would only get them to September 1,

2020, before the end of the governor's proclamation). Therefore, the customer's extended license would be valid until March 1, 2021 (12 months after the original expiration).

Communication efforts and public outreach: Drivers who are not eligible to renew online, but whose license expired during the period covered by the Governor's proclamation of disaster emergency, received a postcard encouraging them to apply for an extension of their driving privileges and to schedule their in-person appointment later. The extension option is available on the Iowa DOT service selector website at <https://iowadot.gov/mvd/driverslicense/service-selector>. We are also promoting this option on social media and on the Iowa DOT website.

HELPFUL QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

WHY ARE WE NOW BROADLY OFFERING SIX-MONTH EXTENSIONS, WHEN PREVIOUSLY WE ONLY OFFERED THEM ON AN AS-NEEDED BASIS?

While the Governor's proclamation of disaster emergency provided relief to customers whose license expired between January 16, 2020 and January 8, 2021, many customers now find themselves in a situation where their license will be immediately invalid for driving purposes on January 9, 2021 when the Governor's proclamation ends (due to there being no time remaining in their 60-day grace period), or they are unable to obtain a renewal appointment before their 60-day grace period ends. The six-month or twelve-month extension option will bridge the gap for these customers to allow them to continue driving until they can complete their regular renewal transaction.

Once a customer receives an extension of their current driver's license, it is critical that they understand the need to make an appointment to renew their license prior to the end of their extension.

IS THE SIX-MONTH EXTENSION VALID FOR IDENTIFICATION PURPOSES?

That depends on the entity requiring identification. We can only assure customers that the six-month extension applies to the driving privilege and cannot guarantee that other entities will honor the extension as a valid form of identification when used in conjunction with the expired plastic card. We should advise customers that the extension may or may not be considered acceptable identification for other purposes, such as banking or flying, and that they should contact the entity to ask if the paper extension, in conjunction with the expired plastic license, will be acceptable for identification.

WILL LAW ENFORCEMENT HONOR THE EXTENSION?

Yes. Since this is already a process that is in place, but is simply being expanded for COVID-19 relief, law enforcement officers are familiar with the extensions. When a driver is given a six-month or twelve-month extension, their expiration date is updated in ARTS as well as the law enforcement database to reflect the extension. Additionally, we are reaching out to law enforcement to ensure they are aware of our expansion of the existing extension process for purposes of COVID-19 relief.

CAN A CUSTOMER GET A SECOND SIX-MONTH EXTENSION?

Yes, if a customer is nearing the end of their first six-month extension, they may apply for a second six-month extension, which is the maximum amount allowable. Or, if a customer is already past or soon approaching their sixth month of expired driving privileges when they apply for the extension, our processing staff will automatically give them a twelve-month extension.

HOW DOES RECEIVING AN EXTENSION IMPACT THE REQUIREMENT TO RETEST IF YOUR LICENSE HAS BEEN EXPIRED FOR MORE THAN ONE YEAR?

Customers who receive a six-month or twelve-month extension are still subject to the requirement to

repeat the knowledge and driving tests if it has been longer than one year since the expiration of their driving privileges.

However, since a license extension effectively extends both the driving privileges and expiration date of the license, a customer is not subject to retesting requirements until it has been more than one year (366 days) from the expiration of their *extension*. In other words, a person who is issued two consecutive six-month extensions is not subject to the one-year retesting requirement until it has been one year since the end of the second six-month extension (i.e., two years from the original expiration of the plastic license).

HOW WILL A CUSTOMER RECEIVE THEIR EXTENSION?

A customer can receive the extension via mail or email. They can indicate on the application by which method they prefer to receive the extension.

ARE EXTENSIONS AVAILABLE FOR COMMERCIAL DRIVER'S LICENSE HOLDERS?

No, we are not offering six-month extensions for CDL-holders. However, CDLs and CLPs that expired on or after March 1, 2020 are extended until February 28, 2021, through an FMCSA waiver, for purposes of driving anywhere in the U.S. Please see MVD IM #20-04 for more information.

ARE EXTENSIONS AVAILABLE FOR NONOPERATOR IDENTIFICATION CARDS?

No, extensions are not an option for nonoperator identification cards.

ARE EXTENSIONS AVAILABLE FOR TEMPORARY FOREIGN NATIONALS?

No, an extension cannot be issued to a temporary foreign national. REAL ID regulations as well as Iowa Code section 321.196(1) only allow us to issue a credential for the length of time the foreign national is authorized to be in the U.S. Of note, the relief provided in the Governor's proclamation that suspends the enforcement of the expired driver's license citation applies to temporary foreign nationals, effectively enabling them to drive with a license that expired on or after January 16, 2020 until the end of the Governor's proclamation on January 8, 2021.

However, we can issue a six-month or twelve-month extension to a permanent resident or naturalized citizen, since they do not have the same limitations.

ARE SIX-MONTH EXTENSIONS AVAILABLE FOR CUSTOMERS WITH MEDICAL OR VISION ISSUES?

It depends. If a driver's record indicates they are required to submit a medical or vision report upon renewal, we must first receive a satisfactory medical or vision report before we can determine how to move forward. If there is any decrease in visual acuity, any change in health status that may impact driving, or a new recommendation from the medical professional pertaining to driving privileges, the driver must first pass any necessary testing before they would be eligible for new issuance, or an extension. When additional restrictions are necessary such as driving when no headlights are required, no interstate or freeway driving, etc, an extension cannot be issued.

Drivers who are subject to a pending re-examination or line examination must complete the reexam or line exam process prior to any further issuance or extension of driving privileges.

CAN A CUSTOMER APPLY FOR A SIX-MONTH EXTENSION BEFORE THEIR LICENSE EXPIRES?

Yes, a customer can apply for a six-month extension both before or after the expiration date of their license. Additionally, we want to make sure we are able to provide relief to customers whose licenses are already expired or expire very soon, and therefore, we are reserving the extensions for licenses that have already expired, or expire within the **next 90 days**.

HOW LONG ARE WE PLANNING TO CONTINUE THE PRACTICE OF ISSUING EXTENSIONS DUE TO COVID-19 SERVICE DISRUPTIONS?


As long as there is a substantial backlog of renewal transactions that need to be completed, we will continue to offer the six-month or twelve-month extension as an option for customers who cannot renew due to “incapacity,” i.e., difficulty in obtaining renewal services. We are monitoring the backlog and will communicate if there are any changes that would impact this policy.

Additionally, for the foreseeable future, we should allow extensions for anyone who has a health concern that increases their risk of contraction, or their doctor has advised they should not go out in public due to concerns about exposure (provided they are otherwise eligible for the extension).

WHAT DOES A SIX-MONTH EXTENSION LOOK LIKE?

Below is an example of a six-month extension issued to a driver whose license expired on April 20, 2020, however, this letter may be undergoing some slight modifications to make it more customer-friendly:

Form 431028



IOWA DOT
SMARTER | SIMPLER | CUSTOMER DRIVEN

www.iowadot.gov

Driver & Identification Services
PO Box 9204 | Des Moines, IA 50306-9204
Phone: 515-244-9124 | Fax: 515-239-1837

Cust No: 4007869
DL No:
Date: 05-11-2020

Dear ,

SUBJECT: Driver's License Extension

Thank you for writing regarding the extension of your Iowa Driver's License.

Under the provisions of Iowa Code section 321.196, any resident of Iowa holding a valid driver's license that is temporarily absent from the state, or incapacitated, may, at the time for renewal for such a license, apply to the department for a temporary license.

This letter is the extension of your license. It must be carried with your driver's license to show that it has been extended under Iowa law, until 30 days after your return to Iowa, providing such nonresidency does not exceed six months from the expiration of your license. This letter must be presented at the time application for renewal is made.

YOUR CURRENT LICENSE, EXPIRING ON 04-20-2020, IS EXTENDED UNTIL 10-20-2020.

If I may be of further assistance, please let me know.

Sincerely,

Driver & Identification Services