

Motor Vehicle Division Informational Memo # 25-03

Ch. 401 Personalized and Special Registration Plates – EO10 Updates

DATE: March 24, 2025

FROM: Sara Siedsma, Motor Vehicle Division

TO: All Motor Vehicle Division staff, County Treasurers and County Treasurer Staff

EFFECTIVE: MARCH 26, 2025

SUBJECT

This informational memo explains updates to administrative rule chapter 761—401, Personalized and Special Registration Plates.

SUMMARY

This chapter was recently revised pursuant to Executive Order 10 (EO10), which required all state agencies to conduct comprehensive review of all existing administrative rules. The goal of the review was to reduce regulatory burdens and restrictive terms, and to remove obsolete, outdated, inconsistent, redundant or unnecessary regulations, including instances where rule language is duplicative of statutory language.

EO10 required the chapter to be rescinded and then reissued as new.

Below is a summary of the changes made to this chapter as part of the EO10 review:

- The chapter was renamed from “Special Registration Plates to “Personalized and Special Registration Plates” to more accurately reflect the content and subject matter of the chapter.
- Subrule 401.2(2) (Special registration plates requiring separate application) was revised to do the following:
 - Allow submission of a DD-214 as an option for applicants to show eligibility for veteran plates, instead of only permitting certification from Department of Veterans Affairs. This change is consistent with how DOT processes applications for other veterans products.
 - Revise the firefighter plate application process in paragraph “d” to only require one signature from the fire chief on the plate application rather than requiring a signature from the fire chief and another fire officer.
 - Add new paragraph “p” was also added giving DOT the authority to accept alternate documentation for military/veteran plates if the Office of the Adjutant General or Department of Veterans Affairs approves, creating more options, less restrictions, and greater flexibility for eligible applicants who may be lacking the typical documentation.
- Rule 401.3 (Character limits) now states that any plate with an emblem on the lefthand side is limited to 5 characters whether personalized or standard. The prior rule only identified 5 plates that were subject to the 5-character limit, which was incorrect.
- Prior rule 401.4 allowing gift certificates for personalized plates was eliminated because there was no statutory basis to issue gift certificates for plates.
- Subrule 401.6(3) (Issuance of special registration plates) has been revised to improve the existing plate pick-up process by providing clarity to the counties and allowing customers extra time to pick up their

special registration plate before it is destroyed (and would then require a new fee and application). The previous rule required new personalized plates to be picked up 90 days from the date ordered whereas the new rule allows 90 days from when the county receives new personalized plates, and 90 days from the last day of the month of registration expiration for replacement plates.

The revised rule chapter is effective March 26, 2025.

LINK TO ADMINISTRATIVE RULES

[761 IOWA ADMINISTRATIVE CODE 401 – Adopted and Filed](#)

CURRENT

Chapter 401 implements Iowa Code section 321.34, which authorizes the issuance of certain specialty license plates. The chapter outlines and establishes the personalized and specialty plate application and eligibility processes and requirements, the criteria for nonprofit organizational decals, the personalized plate message criteria and the procedures regarding the surrender and assignment of plates.

NEW

As of March 26, 2025, the chapter will reflect the changes listed in the summary section above.

BUSINESS IMPACT

Minimal impact. The DOT website has been updated to indicate that the DD214 is an acceptable form of proof for veterans plates and the firefighter plate application has been revised to only require the signature of the fire chief. All other changes to the chapter should not have a significant business impact.