



Motor Vehicle Division Policy Memo # 19-09

NEW E-MAIL DEDICATED TO PERSONALIZED PLATES

DATE: November 14, 2019

FROM: Angel Robinson, Director
Vehicle & Motor Carrier Services Bureau

TO: Iowa County Treasurers
Iowa DOT Vehicle & Motor Carrier Services personnel

SUBJECT

Due to the unprecedented demand for personalized plates – driven by the new Blackout plate – Vehicle Services is instituting a new e-mail account dedicated to personalized plate inquiries and transactions. The e-mail of dot.plates@iowadot.us is now available to all customers.

EXPLANATION

Currently customers, dealers and counties send all e-mail related to every Vehicle Service product or transaction to vscusto@iowadot.us (VScusto). This includes e-mails related to title and registration questions, dealer applications, bonded title applications as well as personalized plate applications paid at the county and plate questions.

On July 1, 2019, Iowa issued the new Blackout plate which has reached unprecedented levels of popularity and led to immense increases in workload and e-mail traffic. From May 1 through June 30, we handled an average of 46 personalized and special plate applications daily. From July 1 through September 30, this average grew to 129, an increase of about 280%.

The increase impacted e-mail traffic in VScusto as well as mail and phone traffic. At the same time, all other products for Vehicle Services remained at or slightly above normal levels.

To help handle this plate demand while also ensuring adequate coverage of all other services, we are establishing a new e-mail account of dot.plates@iowadot.us (Plates) and are asking customers and counties to route all e-mails related to personalized or special plates to this address. We will update forms and our Web site with this address and will use social media to communicate the change.

The existing VScusto mail account will remain in place. If any personal or special plate requests are sent to VScusto, we will still handle those e-mails but will shift them to the Plates account for streamlined processing. We will do the same if a customer or county sends a personalized or special plates e-mail to an individual worker's account.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

WHY IS THIS CHANGE HAPPENING?

The Plates e-mail account is being added to streamline the personal and special plate ordering process while also helping to ensure that all other Vehicle Services products can be properly

addressed. This helps relieve the overwhelming demand on the VScusto account by allowing customers and counties to effectively self-sort their inquiries.

This is needed due to the unprecedented and continuing demand for the Blackout plates. We will assign specific staff to review and respond to the Plates account while still providing full attention to VScusto. We also feel the creation of a dedicated Plates account will be particularly effective in social media and other messaging regarding personalized and special plates.

HOW WILL INDIVIDUAL CUSTOMERS BE IMPACTED?

Customers will benefit from a more streamlined process that should lead to faster order fulfillment and better order tracking. It also helps assure customers that we are giving appropriate priority to plate orders in response to the Blackout plate demand.

HOW WILL NOTIFY CUSTOMERS?

We will change the e-mail account noted on Form 411260 and any other relevant special plate order forms. We will also note this change on the personalized and special plate Web site at <https://iowadot.gov/mvd/personalizedplates/home.aspx>.

HOW WILL COUNTY TREASURER OFFICES BE IMPACTED?

Counties will benefit by being able to self-sort personalized plate orders and inquiries from other needs. We will be able to better track incoming county orders if they are limited to the Plates account. This will also help improve response time to other questions in VS Custo.

We are notifying county treasurer offices through distribution of this memo and will issue reminders as needed. We will also discuss as needed at County Harmonization meetings or other large group gatherings.

WILL WE KEEP THIS ACCOUNT PERMANENTLY?

While the Plates account is being created in response to the Blackout plate demand, we will evaluate its performance after six months to determine if it met the goals of streamlining plate ordering while allowing for more effective use of VScusto. If it has proved effective – or if plate demand continues at a high level – we anticipate keeping this account.

WHO WILL BE THE BEST CONTACT PERSON REGARDING QUESTIONS?

Daniel Yeh, Manager, Vehicle Services
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