

(1) Registrants, whose license plate or validation decals have been mutilated, lost, or stolen, may receive a replacement license plate or decal from the license issuing official upon:

(a) Completion of Form MVR 40-12-265-1, Application for Replacement Motor Vehicle Tag and/or Decal.

(b) Payment of a replacement fee as provided in §40-12-265(b), Code of Ala. 1975.

Upon receipt of the application, the plate officials will update their records to reflect the status of the license plate or decals so that the information will be available for inquiry by law enforcement.

(2) (a) §40-12-265, Code of Ala. 1975, provides that “mutilated or altered license plates are not to be displayed on any motor vehicle.” The terms "mutilation" or "alteration" as used in § 40-12-265, Code of Ala. 1975, includes any situation where an unauthorized decal, sticker, patch, or other device or impediment tends to block or obscure the license plate number, or the revalidation decals, or otherwise makes the license plate or decal illegible.

(b) The mutilated license plate must be surrendered to the license issuing official, prior to the replacement license plate being issued. The license issuing official will retain the mutilated license plate for audit purposes. If the license plate cannot be surrendered, the license issuing official will “revoke” the registration and update their records to reflect the status of the license plate.

(3) (a) A duplicate personalized license plates bearing the original message may be issued if the personalized license plate was lost in the mail; or the personalized license plate is surrendered due to damage, mutilation, etc. A duplicate personalized license plate may be ordered through the license issuing official and a duplicate of the original license plate will be shipped to the registrant.

(b) Situations in which the personalized license plate is not recovered, such as stolen vehicles, stolen license plates, and impounded, repossessed, or totaled vehicles, a duplicate personalized license plate bearing the original message may NOT be issued until the registration period has expired. The registrant has the following replacement license plate options:

1. Request a different personalized message on the original tag type.
2. Request a pre-numbered license plate on the original tag type.
3. Request a pre-numbered license plate on a tag type that does not require an annual additional fee (e.g., standard passenger, God Bless America, etc.).

(c) Under the replacement options in this subsection, the registrant will not be required to pay the annual additional fee. However, a registrant may obtain a license plate from a different license plate category upon payment of the annual additional fee associated with the respective license plate category.

(4) The license plate is the responsibility of the motor carrier when a vehicle is leased by an owner-operator to the interstate motor carrier and the vehicle is registered by the motor carrier in accordance with § 32-6-56, Code of Ala. 1975. Upon termination of the operational lease, it is the responsibility of the motor carrier to recover the license plate from the owner-operator. If the motor carrier fails to recover the license plate from the owner-operator, a replacement plate may not be issued unless the motor carrier presents evidence to the license issuing official that the license plate is reported as stolen to law enforcement.

(5) Any person operating a motor vehicle with a license plate or decal, that is mutilated or altered, is subject to the requirements and sanctions of § 40-12-265(b), Code of Ala. 1975.

(6) A law enforcement officer that locates a license plate or decal previously reported as having been lost or stolen, that is being displayed on a different motor vehicle than the vehicle for which the plate or decal was issued, is required to confiscate the license plate or decal and return it to the local licensing office.

(7) Any law enforcement officer discovering a license plate or decal previously reported as lost or stolen attached to or being displayed on a motor vehicle, has probable cause to believe a crime has been committed, and therefore is presumed to have the authority to confiscate the license plate and/or decal as evidence of a crime. The law enforcement officer may retain custody of the license plate or decal pending judicial determination as to the true ownership of the license plate or decal. Once the true ownership of the license plate or decal has been determined by a court of competent jurisdiction, the law enforcement officer must dispose of the license plate or decal in the manner prescribed by the court.

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Authority: §§40-2A-7(a)(5), 32-6-56, 40-2-11, 40-12-64, 40-12-264, and 40-12-265, Code of Ala. 1975.

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