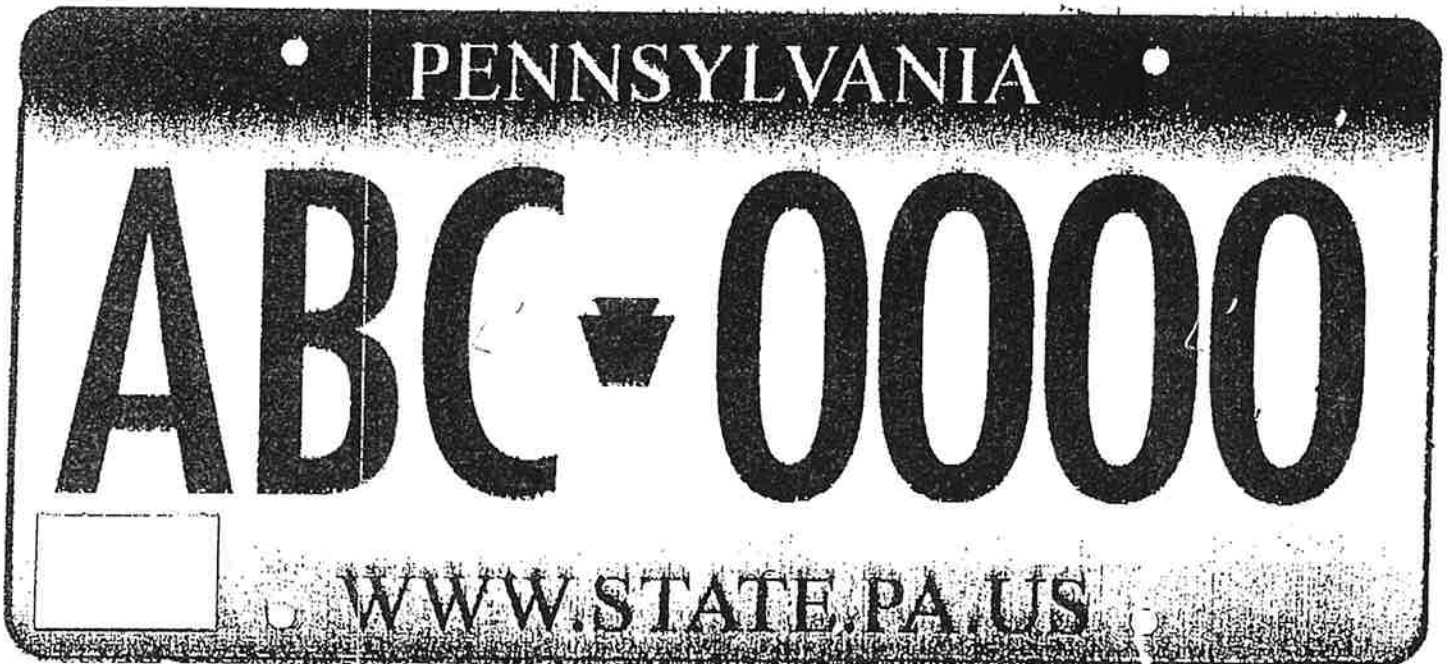


# Introducing . . .

*a First-Class Plate for a First-Class State!*



Dear PennDOT partner:

On February 17, 1999, Gov. Ridge and Secretary Mallory unveiled this new license plate, which will "Move Pennsylvania Forward" by replacing nearly all of the Commonwealth's yellow and blue plates by July 2002. This is the first major license plate replacement since 1976, and it will be an extremely complex and challenging task affecting more than 9 million vehicle owners statewide. How well we accomplish this reissuance will greatly affect the public's attitude toward us in general and license plate replacement in particular, which as recently legislated, will now occur every ten years.

Internally at PennDOT, we will call this opportunity "Project Legacy" because a legacy is something passed on to benefit the future. We are working hard to upgrade license plate tracking and control systems, develop an efficient replacement strategy and make other related improvements to help us serve customers efficiently during this reissuance. These changes, however, will also leave an important legacy to future generations of PennDOT employees and partners, enabling them to serve customers even better in the future.

Additional information about the license plate replacement initiative is attached. Please feel free to share this information with your customers, friends, family and neighbors who might ask you about the license plate replacement. If you need further information, please contact Laura Templeton, Community Relations Coordinator for Driver and Vehicle Services, at 717-787-0485, or visit the Commonwealth ([www.state.pa.us](http://www.state.pa.us)) or PennDOT ([www.dot.state.pa.us](http://www.dot.state.pa.us)) Web sites

# Frequently Asked Questions about License Plate Replacement

## GENERAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION

**Q: Why is PennDOT replacing license plates?**

A: PennDOT prides itself in providing customer service and products that will "Move Pennsylvania Forward." License plate replacement will support this mission in the following ways:

1. **Improving vehicle identification.** Currently there are approximately one million yellow license plates still in use in Pennsylvania. Having greatly exceeded their intended life span, many of these plates have severely deteriorated and are very hard to read. Many blue plates, too, have lost their reflectivity. Replacing these plates will improve vehicle identification and assist in law enforcement.

2. **Reducing unregistered vehicles and fraud.** Once all standard-issue plates are replaced, it will be easy to spot vehicles with old yellow or blue plates. These vehicles will be, at that time, probably unregistered, and the vehicle owners will have likely not fulfilled insurance or inspection requirements. License plate replacement will make our roads safer by assisting law enforcement in spotting these scofflaws and removing potentially unsafe vehicles from the road. More registered vehicles also mean more funding for the maintenance and construction of Pennsylvania's roads.

3. **Updating our state image.** License plates are essentially one-foot billboards for the Commonwealth and are a reflection of our state. By replacing the majority of our plates, we improve our overall state image and help reestablish Pennsylvania as an innovator and leader with an eye to the future.

**Q: Is PennDOT planning on making any other changes related to license plates and registration in the near future?**

A: Yes. In conjunction with this major license plate replacement, we will also discontinue our "T" stickers and replace them with a secure rear windshield credential bearing a specific expiration date for a temporary registration. Eliminating our "T" sticker will help prevent fraud and registration evasion associated with driving with an expired temporary registration sticker.

## VEHICLE AND PLATE TYPES AFFECTED

**Q: What plates are going to be replaced?**

A: All yellow-on-blue and blue-on-yellow plates will be replaced, with the exception of limited editions, such as the "Constitution" plate. Replacement will also not affect plates of other color combinations (antique, Purple Heart, etc.) and all special fund plates (the Wild Resource Conservation - "owl," Zoological - "tiger," Flagship Niagara, D.A.R.E. and Preserve Our Heritage - "railroad" plates).

**Q: Is the replacement going to apply to buses, trailers, trucks, etc., or only passenger vehicles?**

A: This major license plate replacement will apply to all types of vehicles

**Q: My blue plate is perfectly fine. Why does it need to be replaced?**

A: Some blue plates on our roadways are as much as 16 years old, and a license plate's expected life span is about ten years. Even though these plates may appear fine in the daylight, their reflectivity gradually deteriorates over the years, which makes vehicle identification more difficult. In addition to improving vehicle identification, another goal of this major replacement is to reduce fraud associated with license plate misuse and expired registration. No significant progress can be made in these areas, and the lost revenue from these problems cannot be recouped unless the majority of our existing plates are replaced. Over time, this plate replacement initiative will pay for itself through these recovered revenues. Replacing the blue plates then is not an unnecessary expense but, in many ways, a wise investment in the Commonwealth's future.

### ANTICIPATED SCHEDULE FOR PLATE REPLACEMENT AND AVAILABILITY

**Q: When will plates be replaced?**

A: PennDOT plans to replace plates from September 1999 through mid 2002. New plates will be issued systematically in phases as follows:

**Phase 1:** From September 1999 through February 2000, PennDOT will replace all standard-issue yellow plates. To remove the worn out yellow plates from the road as quickly as possible, PennDOT will search its databases to identify vehicle owners with yellow plates and will directly mail them a new plate, a new registration card and a new registration sticker. Vehicle owners with yellow plates will not need to apply for a new plate or wait for registration renewal to get one.

**Phase 2:** From March through June of 2000, PennDOT plans on replacing all personalized tags both blue-on-yellow and yellow-on-blue, as well as miscellaneous low-quantity plates (taxi, trailer, etc.). In May 2000, all apportioned vehicle (tractor trailer) plates, regardless of color, will be replaced. All registered fleet plates will also be replaced in spring of 2000. By the end of Phase 2, PennDOT will have replaced the vast majority of the yellow plates.

**Phase 3:** From July 2000 through June 2002, PennDOT will replace the approximately 8 million standard-issue blue plates. Unlike yellow plates, receipt of a replacement for a standard-issue blue plate will coincide with registration renewal in either fiscal year 2000-2001 (July 2000-June 2001) or fiscal year 2001-2002 (July 2001-June 2002). PennDOT anticipates replacing the plates for vehicles with titles ending in an even number one year and those with titles ending in an odd number the next. When vehicle owners renew their registration, they will receive a new plate, registration sticker and registration card at one time.

**Phase 4:** During the first half of 2002, PennDOT will replace special organization plates, including those of universities and colleges. Other examples of special organization plates include the Lions Club, Army Reserve or Ducks Unlimited plates. Again, this replacement affects special organization plates but not special fund plates (the Wild Resource Conservation - "owl," Zoological - "tiger," Flagship Niagara, D.A.R.E. and Preserve Our Heritage - "railroad" plates).

**Q: Why doesn't PennDOT replace all plates at once? Why will it take nearly three years to replace the plates?**

A: PennDOT very carefully and strategically planned plate replacement to make it as effective, cost-efficient and customer-friendly as possible. PennDOT wanted to address very valid vehicle identification concerns by removing the yellow plates from our roads as soon as possible but, at the same time, needs time to build up inventory to replace more than 9 million plates. The schedule, as outlined above, will allow us to accomplish both of these goals, should minimize customer inconvenience and will allow us to complete this task in a manageable and organized fashion.

**Q: Why will yellow plate replacements be sent out separately from registration renewal, while blue plate replacements will be sent out according to registration renewal dates?**

A: Again, PennDOT wanted to remove the yellow plates as quickly as possible because many are worn out, unreadable and inadequate for vehicle identification. Because there are fewer than 1 million of these plates, PennDOT can manageably speed up their replacement by not waiting for a full registration renewal cycle to pass. On the other hand, there are more than 8 million blue plates and they, for the most part, are not as deteriorated. Replacing the blue plates according to two renewal cycles will provide us with a structured way to make this massive replacement manageable and efficient, and it will allow the Bureau of Correctional Industries to gradually build up the massive inventory needed.

**Q: When was the last time PennDOT replaced the majority of license plates?**

A: 1976.

**Q: Why did PennDOT wait so long to replace plates?**

A: The replacement of more than 9 million plates will certainly prove to be a complex and challenging endeavor, and over the past several years, PennDOT has been taking many necessary steps to ensure that our customers will receive innovative, high-quality plates in a timely, cost-effective and accurate manner. Since Pennsylvania has not had a major license plate replacement since 1976, PennDOT spent a great deal of time discussing license plate replacement procedures, as well as license plate design and materials, with other states. We identified the best practices and built upon them to customize a plan that is right for Pennsylvania's particular needs.

One key aspect of an efficient and accurate license plate replacement is a reliable and state-of-the-art license plate inventory tracking and control system. PennDOT has been working diligently to improve these database systems over the last several years, and the necessary improvements will be completed by July 1, 1999. These enhancements will assist us in performing this and subsequent replacement efforts more efficiently. Undertaking this major project has also required close and extensive coordination among PennDOT, the Bureau of Correctional Industries, the State Police and many other partners and suppliers.

**Q: Can I get a new plate sooner than scheduled?**

A: Unfortunately, no plates of the new design will be available on demand until July 2000 because our initial responsibilities are to get all yellow plates off the road and to build up plate inventory for our 9 million customers. Even after July 2000, we strongly encourage customers to wait until their

scheduled time to obtain a new license plate because the phased replacement was designed to serve all customers as efficiently and effectively as possible. After July 2000, customers may apply for new plates outside of the replacement schedule, but these plates will cost \$7.50. Customers who wait until their appointed time to receive a new plate will not incur this charge.

**Q: If I buy a new car and do not transfer my tag, will I get a plate with the new design?**

A: If you buy a new car and get a new plate before July 2000, you will receive our current blue plate. Issuing the blue tags for new vehicle purchases until July 2000 will allow PennDOT to build up inventory of the new plate design for our existing 9 million vehicle owners, allow us to remove the yellow plates as quickly as possible and enable us to use up already manufactured blue plates that dealers have in inventory. Beginning in July 2000, the new plate design will be available when customers purchase vehicles from dealers.

**Q: If my current license plate is lost or stolen, and I apply for a replacement, will I receive a plate in the new design?**

A: If you apply for a replacement plate before July 2000, you will receive our current blue plate. Issuing the blue tags as replacements until July 2000 will allow PennDOT to build up inventory of the new plate design for our 9 million vehicle owners, allow us to remove the yellow plates as quickly as possible and enable us to use up already manufactured blue plates in our existing inventory. Beginning in July 2000, those who apply for replacement of a lost or stolen plate will receive a plate in the new design. Replacement of lost and stolen plates costs \$7.50.

**Q: When will car dealers and tag agents have the new plates available?**

A: Starting in July 2000, the new plates will be available through more than 11,000 decentralized outlets, including dealerships, statewide. This timing is necessary to build up plate inventory and to devote initial production to getting the yellow plates off the road as soon as possible.

**Q: Will on-line messengers be providing new plates?**

A: Beginning in July 2000, new license plates may be obtained at on-line messenger locations throughout the state. Any customer seeking to obtain the new plate outside of the established replacement schedule will be charged \$7.50. On-line messengers are also permitted to charge customers an additional service fee for the transactions they handle. To obtain the address of the on-line messenger nearest you, please call 1-877-PA-NU-TAG (1-877-726-8824).

**Q: Do I have to put the new plate on my vehicle? When?**

A: Yes, it is mandatory and essential that you put the new plate on the vehicle to which it is registered as soon as possible after you receive it. Upon plate issuance, PennDOT's and law enforcement's databases will show the newly registered plate and will indicate that the previous plate is "dead". Complying with this guideline as soon as possible will aid law enforcement in accurate vehicle identification.

**Q: Many states replace plates on a regularly scheduled basis. Will Pennsylvania?**

A: Until last year, Pennsylvania was among 16 states without a standard periodic replacement of license plates. As recently legislated, Pennsylvania will now replace its license plates every ten years.

## LICENSE PLATE PRODUCTION, DESIGN, CONFIGURATION AND PLACEMENT

### **Q: Who will make our plates?**

A: As in the past, the Bureau of Correctional Industries will make our plates. All plates are manufactured at the State Correctional Institution of Pittsburgh.

### **Q: What does the plate look like?**

A: The background of the new plate design is a three-color gradient, starting with blue at the top, fading to white in the middle and then fading to yellow. Navy blue letters and numbers offer good contrast against the white central portion of the plate. Standard plates will continue to bear three characters, a keystone and then four more characters. Pennsylvania, in white, appears at the top of the plate against the blue background, and the Commonwealth's Internet Web site address "www.state.pa.us" in navy appears at the bottom of the plate against the yellow background. Plate design meets the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators' standards and was kept simple to provide good readability and vehicle identification. The new plate design can be viewed on the Internet at the Commonwealth (www.state.pa.us) and PennDOT (www.dot.state.pa.us) Web sites.

### **Q: Are samples of the new plates available?**

A: To ensure that all yellow plates are replaced as soon as possible and that enough inventory is built up to serve all our customers in a timely fashion, all plate materials must initially be devoted to making real plates. PennDOT does intend on making samples available after adequate inventory exists and will provide a release date for samples in the future. Until then, customers and collectors may view the new plate design on the Commonwealth (www.state.pa.us) and PennDOT (www.dot.state.pa.us) Web sites.

### **Q: Why is the Web site address on the plate?**

A: Today, and even more so in the future, technology is and will remain central to "Moving Pennsylvania Forward." During the Ridge Administration, Pennsylvania has taken great strides in supporting technology and incorporating it into the fabric of the Commonwealth. Technology makes us more efficient and more competitive in attracting jobs and revenue to the Commonwealth, and the Internet is one of these key technologies. As the first state to incorporate its Web site address into its standard-issue plate design (and, according to our research, the first jurisdiction worldwide to do so), Pennsylvania is succinctly showing it is a progressive and innovative leader among its peers, which will keep it economically and culturally competitive in not only the national but also the global marketplace. We are hopeful that this widespread "advertisement" of the Commonwealth's Web site address will encourage both those inside and outside the state to visit the Web site and stay informed about the Commonwealth and what it has to offer. Simply put, this plate design symbolizes a forward-thinking Pennsylvania that sees technology as a key factor in creating a brighter future for the Commonwealth's citizens and businesses.

### **Q: Why is the Web site address in all capital letters?**

A: While Web site addresses are normally lower case, the capitalized address works also. Upper case letters offer better plate readability.

**Q: Will the bus, trailer, truck, etc., plates look the same?**

A: The plate described previously is the plate for passenger vehicles. Plates for other types of vehicles will look similar, but they will have the vehicle type (bus, trailer, truck, etc.) at the bottom instead of the Web site address. Also, special organization plates will continue to display the name of the sponsoring organization at the bottom.

**Q: Some states now have flat plates. Will Pennsylvania's new plate be flat?**

A: Pennsylvania's new plate will not be flat; it will still have raised alpha/numeric characters. Producing flat plates is nearly twice as expensive and would not be an effective use of taxpayer dollars.

**Q: Will the technology used to make our plates be different in any way?**

A: Yes. Over the last 15 years, Pennsylvania has used a technique called "beads on paint" to make license plates. This process involves "baking" miniature glass beads onto the numbers and letters, causing them to be reflective. The new plates will be made of reflective sheeting, which means the background of the plate is reflective. Adopting this technology will provide us with plates that have better night-time visibility, which helps in vehicle identification. Manufacturing plates with reflective sheeting is also less time-consuming, so customers can get their replacement plates more quickly. Most other states also currently use reflective sheeting, which is the license plate material and technology suggested in the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators' license plate standards.

**Q: Will Pennsylvania be issuing a front and a back plate for each vehicle? If not, why not?**

A: No. Pennsylvania, along with about 15 other states, will continue to only require a back plate. Manufacturing and distributing two plates for each vehicle would greatly increase production time and cost to taxpayers, while offering little to no benefit. There is no empirical data proving that two plates improve vehicle identification. In addition, having to build up double the inventory would greatly slow down plate replacement. Maintaining a single back plate requirement will allow customers to continue to display a decorative plate on the front of their vehicles, if they so choose.

**Q: I currently have a standard-issue plate with a random letter/number configuration. Will my new plate have the same letter/number configuration?**

A: No. When the Bureau of Correctional Industries (BCI) begins production of the new standard-issue plates, they will use new alpha-numeric sequences that were not previously issued in Pennsylvania. Issuing a new series of plates will reduce opportunities for license plate fraud and will prevent confusion over vehicle identification. For example, if BCI duplicated existing standard-issue combinations, and then these combinations were issued randomly, the owner of yellow plate ABC-123 could inadvertently receive a citation for a violation committed by the owner of ABC-123 in the new design. This problem could be alleviated if we reissued everyone their existing combination, but that plan also presents other difficulties:

1. Essentially all plates would need to be personalized. Having to make a certain plate at a certain time for all 9 million plates would drastically increase production time and cost and would slow down the replacement, requiring people to wait longer for their new plates.

2. A **specific** plate would have to be issued to each and every vehicle owner—all 9 million of them. Logistically this process would be difficult, very time-consuming and would increase the chance of error. Our goal is to provide all our customers with new plates as soon as possible.
3. To increase customer convenience, the majority of vehicle owners—the nearly 8 million with standard-issue blue plates—will have the option of getting their new plate through the mail, at one of our three full-service driver and vehicle service centers or through a nearby on-line messenger when they renew their registration. If we were reissuing a specific plate to each customer, all distribution would have to be centralized, eliminating the service options our customers currently have and choose to use at their convenience.

**Q: Isn't there any way I can keep the alpha-numeric combination from my old standard-issue plate?**

A: Yes. To maintain your combination, you may pay \$20 to make this your personalized plate. On the other hand, a random configuration plate would be issued free of charge. Also, requesting a specific combination that is not currently a personalized plate will increase your wait time for a new plate by approximately two months. Further information on personalizing a current standard-issue combination will be available as we get closer to plate replacement.

## LICENSE PLATE REPLACEMENT COSTS AND FUNDING

**Q: What will the new license plate cost?**

A: The new license plates, including existing personalized tags, will be issued at no charge to the customer. Actually, this major plate replacement, upon its completion and in conjunction with the replacement of our current "T" sticker system, will generate revenue because registration evaders will need to register their vehicles to get the new plate. Based on the experiences of other states, the Commonwealth can expect a 4-5% increase in registration, or an additional \$13.8 million annually, after plate replacement is complete. This \$32 million initiative, then, is not so much an expense but an investment in the Commonwealth, its image, and the safety of its roadways.

**Q: Will I have to pay an additional fee to get my new plate in its existing configuration if my current plate is personalized?**

A: No. Existing personalized configurations will be reproduced in the new design at no additional fee.

**Q: Why is regular license plate replacement necessary? Doesn't it unnecessarily spend money that could be put into maintaining our roads?**

A: Regular plate replacement helps ensure the safety of Pennsylvania's roadways and its motorists. The expected life span of a license plate is approximately ten years. Even though a plate may appear fine in daylight, its reflectivity gradually declines over the years, and it should be replaced periodically to ensure good readability and vehicle identification. Also, periodically replacing the majority of plates helps keep fraud in check, helps identify those evading registration and assists in identifying and removing potentially uninsured and uninspected vehicles from our roadways.

Because major plate replacement will bring in more revenue through increased vehicle registration, in time it pays for itself. License plate replacement thus is not an unnecessary expense but instead a wise investment that promises later dividends in terms of revenue and safety.

**Q: Is this why I am paying more for my vehicle registration than I used to?**

**A:** No. The funds generated by the 1997 registration fee increase are devoted to major roadway and bridge construction throughout the state. The registration fee increase generates about \$208 million a year, and PennDOT is putting this money to good use in improving and expanding the Commonwealth's transportation system and infrastructure.

## **OLD YELLOW OR BLUE LICENSE PLATES**

**Q: When I get a new plate, what should I do with my old plate?**

**A:** Currently, when a vehicle owner receives a new plate, PennDOT requests that the owner return the retired or "dead" tag. However, because of mailing and storage costs for 9 million plates, PennDOT is not requesting that plates be returned once this major replacement begins. Instead, as of September 1999, customers may keep their old plate or recycle it. They may place the plates in their curbside recycling or drop them off at one of PennDOT's County Maintenance Offices. You may obtain the address of the office nearest you through our toll-free hotline: 1-877-PA-NU-TAG (1-877-726-8824). For recycling, we urge the public to either remove their current registration sticker from the old plate to deter fraudulent reuse of the plate or to cut the plate in half. Those who wish to keep their plates and display them, say in a garage, are also encouraged to remove the current registration sticker to deter theft and reuse.

**Q: Can I put my old plate on the front of my vehicle?**

**A:** PennDOT and law enforcement agencies strongly discourage vehicle owners from displaying their old plates on the front of their vehicles because it may cause confusion and interfere with vehicle identification, especially when traveling out of state.

**Q: I have a "live" yellow or blue tag that is not currently assigned to a vehicle. Will it be replaced?**

**A:** These plates will not be replaced until you attempt to register them to vehicles.

## **MORE INFORMATION**

**Q: How do I get more specific information or updated information about plate replacement as it progresses?**

**A:** PennDOT will periodically provide additional information on plate replacement as its start in September 1999 draws closer. Customers can get this information through the Commonwealth's Web site at "www.state.pa.us." Information will also be made available directly through PennDOT's Web site at "www.dot.state.pa.us." Customers may also obtain information through PennDOT's toll-free license plate hotline: 1-877-PA-NU-TAG (1-877-726-8824).

Kirk

PERMISSABLE/SPECIAL RELEASE OF A PERSONALIZED REGISTRATION PLATE BEING TRANSFERRED (WITH OR WITHOUT TITLE WORK)

FROM	TO	FORMS	RELEASE LETTER	FEES	PLATE RETURN TO BUREAU	NEW PLATE MADE *	APP'L DIRECTED SPECIAL TAG UNIT	DEX AREA
Permissible	Between spouses or between parent(s) [including step-parent(s) or parent(s)-in-law] and their child(ren) [including stepchild(ren) or child(ren)-in-law]	MV-44	NO	\$ 4.00	NO	NO * If Requested \$20.00 Fee, Tracing, MV-904	NO	YES
Individual	Individual	MV-904	YES	\$20.00	YES	YES	YES	
(Lessee) Individual	(Lessor) Leasing Company	MV-44	NO	\$ 4.00	NO	NO		YES
Leasing Company	(Lessee) Individual	MV-44	NO	\$ 4.00	NO	NO		YES
Co-owner Leasing Company	Leasing Company	MV-44	NO	\$ 4.00	NO	NO		YES
Individual Company	Company	MV-904	YES	\$20.00	YES	YES	YES	
Company	Individual	MV-904	YES	\$20.00	YES	YES	YES	
Sole Proprietorship of Company	Owner of Company	MV-44	NO	\$ 4.00	NO	NO		YES
Individual Corporation	Corporation	MV-904	YES	\$20.00	YES	YES	YES	
Individual Corporation	Individual	MV-904	YES	\$20.00	YES	YES	YES	
Individual Corporation	Individual	MV-904	YES	\$20.00	YES	YES	YES	
Individual Corporation	Incorporated	MV-904	YES	\$20.00	YES	YES	YES	
Individual Corporation	Individual	MV-904	YES	\$20.00	YES	YES	YES	
Unrelated	One of the Owners	MV-44	NO	\$ 4.00	NO	NO		YES