



**JULIE P. MAGEE**  
Commissioner

# State of Alabama Department of Revenue

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Montgomery, Alabama 36132

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Deputy Commissioner

## **MEMORANDUM**

**2011-19**

TO: License Plate Issuing Officials

FROM: Mike Gamble, Assistant Director  
Motor Vehicle Division

SUBJECT: Mandatory Physical Inspection Requirements for Motor Vehicles

Recently, several license plate issuing officials have requested clarification as to when they are required to physically inspect motor vehicles. This memorandum addresses the mandatory physical inspection requirements for motor vehicles when a license plate issuing official is making application for certificate of title and/or issuing a registration.

### **Inspection Requirements - Motor Vehicles Subject to Titling**

Alabama law (ref: Section 32-8-35(d), Code of Alabama 1975) requires that, prior to processing an application for first Alabama certificate of title, every designated agent, including a license plate issuing official, is required to physically inspect the vehicle to verify that the vehicle identification number (VIN) on the title application is correct. An application for first certificate of title includes any application for certificate of title supported by one of the following ownership documents:

- a. Manufacturer's certificate of origin (MCO) or manufacturer's statement of origin (MSO)
- b. Out of state certificate of title
- c. Out of state registration (if vehicle is not subject to titling in that state)
- d. Standard form 97 (government form)
- e. Surety bond (if not currently titled in Alabama)
- f. Abandoned motor vehicle bill of sale (if not currently titled in Alabama)
- g. Court order (if not currently titled in Alabama)

**By signing the title application, the authorized representative of the license plate issuing official is attesting to the fact that the vehicle was physically inspected by that office prior to processing the title application.** Note that the authorized representative is also attesting to the fact that he or she identified the person signing the title application and witnessed the signature on the application.

### **Inspection Requirements - Motor Vehicles Not Subject to Titling**

Alabama law (ref: Section 32-8-32, Code of Alabama 1975) requires that, prior to issuing a license plate or transferring a license plate for use on a motor vehicle, the license plate issuing official is required to physically inspect the vehicle to verify that the vehicle identification number (VIN) to be recorded on the registration is correct. Physical inspection requirements do not apply in the following situations:

- a. Registration under the International Registration Plan (IRP)
- b. Motor vehicles previously registered in this state during the previous two calendar years
- c. Registration renewals
- d. Motor vehicles owned by a dealer or manufacturer and issued either a dealer or manufacturer license plate
- e. Registration of utility trailers

**Note: The physical inspection requirements include non-titled motor vehicles such as pre-1975 year models.**

Note that the license plate issuing official may authorize the use of form MVT 5-10, Motor Vehicle Inspection by a Government Official, when the motor vehicle cannot be driven or delivered to the license plate issuing official's office for a physical inspection because of the size of vehicle or for other special reasons. **If the applicant for certificate of title or registration cannot present the motor vehicle for the required physical inspection, the license plate issuing official is required by law to refuse to process the application for certificate of title or issuance of the registration.** It should also be noted that Section 32-8-13, Code of Alabama 1975, provides in part that "a person is guilty of a Class A misdemeanor who willfully violates any ... provision of this chapter."

If you have any questions regarding this matter, please contact the Registration Section at tags@revenue.alabama.gov or (334) 242-9006.