

# THE DIPLOMATIC BEAT

A LAW ENFORCEMENT GUIDE TO  
DRIVER'S LICENSES, VEHICLE REGISTRATION,  
AND TRAFFIC INCIDENTS INVOLVING FOREIGN  
DIPLOMATIC AND CONSULAR PERSONNEL



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
BUREAU OF DIPLOMATIC SECURITY  
OFFICE OF FOREIGN MISSIONS



OFM

## INTRODUCTION

As part of the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Diplomatic Security, the Office of Foreign Missions (OFM) administers a variety of programs involving the foreign diplomatic community in the United States. This diplomatic community includes diplomats, consular personnel, administrative and technical staff, and their family members.

OFM works with the Office of the Chief of Protocol, which determines eligibility for diplomatic immunities and privileges, to serve the international community and protect Americans who share the road with our diplomatic community.

OFM's most visible program is the Diplomatic Motor Vehicle program, which includes the registration of all diplomatic vehicles — whether official or personal — in the United States, as well as the issuance of U.S. Department of State diplomatic license plates and driver's licenses.

Administered in accordance with U.S. laws and international law and treaties, this nationwide program regulates the acquisition, registration, and disposition of all motor vehicles belonging to foreign missions and their members.

The program:

- Verifies that mandated insurance standards are maintained
- Ensures that members of the foreign diplomatic community and their families who operate a motor vehicle in the United States are issued U.S. Department of State driver's licenses
- Monitors driving records to ensure unsafe drivers are removed from the road.

OFM ensures that diplomatic benefits, privileges, and immunities are properly exercised in accordance with U.S. and international laws. Although holders of U.S. Department of State-issued driver's licenses may enjoy various diplomatic privileges and immunities, such individuals are nevertheless obliged under international treaties to respect local law — they are **not** beyond the reach of the law!

This brochure offers a brief overview of four key aspects of the Diplomatic Motor Vehicle program:

- Driver's Licenses
- Vehicle License Plates and Registration
- Diplomatic Immunities and Privileges
- Contact Information.

For more information about the Diplomatic Motor Vehicle program or diplomatic privileges and immunities in general, contact one of the OFM or Diplomatic Security offices listed in the "Contact Information" section, or visit the OFM Web site at [www.state.gov/ofm](http://www.state.gov/ofm).

## U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE DRIVER'S LICENSES

OFM's Diplomatic Motor Vehicle Office is the sole driver's-licensing authority for diplomats assigned to the United States and their dependents.

Through the Diplomatic Motor Vehicle Office, OFM ensures that members of the foreign-missions community and their families are issued U.S. Department of State driver's licenses. It also monitors driving records to ensure that drivers within the diplomatic and consular communities are operating safely.

Foreign diplomats and their dependents may use their foreign driver's licenses for only 30 days after their arrival in the United States. After that time, the individual must possess a valid U.S. Department of State-issued driver's license to be eligible to operate a motor vehicle in this country.

OFM's Diplomatic Motor Vehicle Office will issue a Department of State driver's license only after an individual has passed a vision test, and, in those cases where the Department has deemed it necessary for reasons of public safety, also has successfully completed written and/or road tests administered by the Department of Motor Vehicles in the jurisdiction in which they reside.

The Diplomatic Motor Vehicles Office maintains an online driver-history database of all individuals licensed by the U.S. Department of State containing:

- The individual's name
- License number
- Class of license and restrictions, if any
- Status of the license
- Previous U.S. license, if any
- Previous foreign license, if any
- A record of any reports of accidents and/or moving violations

## ► VALID DOS DRIVER'S LICENSES



front



back

Other options include:



The diplomatic driver's license background is light blue; lettering is black; a kinegram, which includes multiple layers of security and features an American flag, and ocean and mountain scenes, is embedded above the driver's photo on the front of the card; and an image of the interior of the Lincoln Memorial is printed in the background on the right front side.

Law enforcement agencies may obtain training materials on the security features by contacting the Office of Foreign Mission's Diplomatic Motor Vehicle Office at [OfmDmvEnforcement@state.gov](mailto:OfmDmvEnforcement@state.gov) or the Department's Diplomatic Security Protective Liaison Office at (202) 895-3600. The card design was updated in 2011. Previous versions appear significantly different and are no longer valid.

State and local law enforcement agencies should note that holders of Department of State driver's licenses:

- Are subject to the issuance of traffic citations
- May be entitled to diplomatic immunity
- May be unfamiliar with American customs and the English language
- May be unfamiliar with local driving practices

The U.S. Department of State routinely informs all foreign diplomatic missions that the operation of a motor vehicle in the United States by persons enjoying diplomatic privileges and immunities is a privilege that may be withdrawn in cases of abuse.

## VEHICLE LICENSE PLATES AND REGISTRATION

OFM's Diplomatic Motor Vehicle Office regulates the acquisition, registration, and disposition of all motor vehicles belonging to foreign missions and their members.

All vehicles owned or operated by the diplomatic community must be registered with the Diplomatic Motor Vehicle Office. The registration card indicates the name(s) of the registered owner(s).

Registration cards cannot be used to transfer ownership. Titles are not provided upon registration but are issued at the time of a vehicle's disposition.

Vehicles registered with OFM must display U.S. Department of State-issued license plates at their front and rear. Adhesive decals indicating the expiration month and year of the registration must be affixed to the rear license plate of each vehicle.

Department of State license plates are U.S. Government property and must be returned to OFM upon termination of mission duties or upon demand by the U.S. Department of State. Lost or stolen plates must be reported immediately to OFM's Diplomatic Motor Vehicle Office at (202) 895-3521, or after hours to (571) 345-3146, or toll-free to (866) 217-2089.

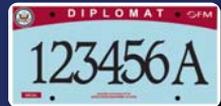
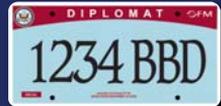
The Office of Foreign Missions issues license plates with three alpha and four numeric digits on a blue background with a red banner. The current plate design and formats are pictured on the right.

License plates with one letter and six numbers are issued to members of the Secretariats of the Organization of American States and United Nations.

Vehicles with diplomatic license plates:

- Must be covered by liability insurance
- Are not generally subject to inspection
- May not be sold or exported without the approval of the U.S. Department of State.

B0059353		United States Department of State Office of Foreign Missions Washington, D.C. 20520	
PLATE NO DBB0001	MOTOR VEHICLE REGISTRATION	DECAL NO 0200100	
VEHICLE IDENTIFICATION NO. ABCTD62V810000009		YEAR 2001	MAKE MODEL STYLE ROL SIC LM
DIPLOMAT, ADAM M. 3507 INTERNATIONAL PL NW WASHINGTON, DC 20008			
REG. DATE 09/01/2001	CO-OWNER(S)	REG FEE	
EXP. DATE 09/30/2002	TITLE FOR THIS VEHICLE HELD AT THE DIPLOMATIC MOTOR VEHICLE OFFICE		



NOTE: State and local law enforcement personnel may verify U.S. Department of State driver's licenses and vehicle registrations through the National Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (NLETS) (state code/ORI is "US").

## DIPLOMATIC AND CONSULAR PRIVILEGES AND IMMUNITIES

When cited for traffic violations, members of foreign diplomatic missions and their dependents must take the appropriate steps to resolve each offense.

Failure to properly address a violation may have significant consequences for the holder of a diplomatic driver's license, including:

- Loss of driving privileges
- Fines
- Issuance of an arrest warrant for failure to appear in court.

When OFM's Diplomatic Motor Vehicle Office is notified that a member of the diplomatic and/or consular communities has been cited for a traffic offense, OFM will notify the alleged offender's diplomatic mission and advise that office on the appropriate means of resolving the case.

The U.S. Department of State will NOT intervene with local jurisdictions to contest traffic citations, nor does it have the authority to dismiss such violations or cancel their associated fines.

During a traffic stop or vehicle incident, law enforcement should contact the Office of Foreign Missions at (202) 895-3500 or via email at [OFMDMVIInfo@state.gov](mailto:OFMDMVIInfo@state.gov). For general questions about OFM vehicle registrations, driver's licenses, or diplomatic or consular privileges and immunities, please contact the nearest OFM regional office or the closest Diplomatic Security field office. See the Contact Information section of this brochure for a list of offices and phone numbers.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

### OFFICE OF FOREIGN MISSIONS

(202) 895-3500

[OFMDMVIInfo@state.gov](mailto:OFMDMVIInfo@state.gov)

### CHICAGO REGIONAL OFFICE

77 W. Jackson Blvd., Ste. 2122

Chicago, IL 60604-1503

(312) 353-5762

[OFMCGCustomerService@state.gov](mailto:OFMCGCustomerService@state.gov)

### HOUSTON REGIONAL OFFICE

8701 S. Gessner Rd., Ste. 906

Houston, Texas 77074

(713) 272-2865

[OFMHOCustomerService@state.gov](mailto:OFMHOCustomerService@state.gov)

### LOS ANGELES REGIONAL OFFICE

10940 Wilshire Blvd., Ste. 1425

Los Angeles, CA 90024

(310) 235-6292

[OFMLACustomerService@state.gov](mailto:OFMLACustomerService@state.gov)

### MIAMI REGIONAL OFFICE

95 Merrick Way, Ste. 505

Coral Gables, FL 33134

(305) 442-4943

[OFMMICustomerService@state.gov](mailto:OFMMICustomerService@state.gov)

### NEW YORK REGIONAL OFFICE

799 United Nations Plaza, 8<sup>th</sup> fl.

New York, NY 10017

(646) 282-2825

[OFMNYCustomerService@state.gov](mailto:OFMNYCustomerService@state.gov)

### SAN FRANCISCO REGIONAL OFFICE

One Market, Spear Tower, Ste. 1375

San Francisco, CA 94105

(415) 744-2910

[OFMFSCustomerService@state.gov](mailto:OFMFSCustomerService@state.gov)

### DIPLOMATIC SECURITY PROTECTIVE LIAISON OFFICE

(202) 895-3600

### ATLANTA RESIDENT OFFICE

10 Tenth Street, NE, Suite 160

Atlanta, GA 30309

Phone: (404) 879-0134

Fax: (404) 879-0149

### BOSTON FIELD OFFICE

10 Causeway St., Ste. 1001

Boston, MA 02222

(617) 565-8200

### CHICAGO FIELD OFFICE

230 South Dearborn St.

Ste. 2318

Chicago, IL 60604

(312) 353-6163

### HOUSTON FIELD OFFICE

Federal Bldg.

1919 Smith St., Ste. 2100

Houston, TX 77002

Phone: (713) 209-3483

Fax: (713) 209-3470

### LOS ANGELES FIELD OFFICE

255 Temple St., Ste. 1273

Los Angeles, CA 90012

(213) 894-3290

### MIAMI FIELD OFFICE

1645 Biscayne Blvd., Ste. 310

Miami, FL 33132

Phone: (305) 810-5850

Fax: (305) 810-5816

### NEW YORK FIELD OFFICE

1 Executive Drive, Ste. 500

Ft. Lee, N.J. 07024

Phone: (201) 346-8100

Fax: (201) 944-5106

### SAN FRANCISCO FIELD OFFICE

235 Pine Street, Suite 900

San Francisco, CA 94104

Phone: (415) 705-1176

Fax: (415) 705-1187

### WASHINGTON FIELD OFFICE

2222 Gallows Rd., Ste. 300

Dunn Loring, VA 22027

Phone: (571) 226-9300

Fax: (571) 226-9382