

Under the Trooper's Hat

May 2024 – Suspension of Vehicle Registration

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North Dakota Century Code 39-04-06(1) gives the North Dakota Department of Transportation (NDDOT) motor vehicle division the power to suspend a vehicle's registration if it is deemed unsafe, unfit for operation, or fails to meet legal equipment requirements. These equipment standards are outlined in North Dakota Century Code 39-21 and North Dakota Administrative Code 37-12. Common violations encountered by law enforcement include issues with window tint, fender requirements (wide tires), mufflers and front license plates.

If the owner or operator, if previously stopped for the violation, received a warning or citation, and failed to address the violation, an officer can request NDDOT intervention to ensure compliance. In exceptional cases, if the owner or operator indicates refusal to correct the violation, the officer is not required to wait for a subsequent violation and may immediately request NDDOT action to bring the vehicle into compliance.

Once the NDDOT Motor Vehicle receives notification from law enforcement, the following action is taken:

1. A Notice to Suspend the Vehicle Registration letter is sent to the owner(s):
 - a. The notice states the issue and violation.
 - b. The notice gives the registered owner(s) 30-days from the date of the letter to correct the violation.
 - c. A compliance inspection sheet listing the violation(s) to be inspected is sent with the letter. The inspection sheet must be completed by a law enforcement agency. The inspecting officer must inspect the violation(s) listed and indicate either a pass or a fail. All violations must have a pass for the suspension to be stopped or removed. The officer must sign the inspection sheet.
2. If the inspection sheet is not received within the 30-day time frame stated on the letter, the vehicle's registration is suspended until such time as the vehicle is brought into compliance, inspected, and the NDDOT is notified.

Following notification from NDDOT to the owner and the owner fails to bring the vehicle into compliance, registration is suspended. A notation is added to the owner's account, indicating the vehicle's non-compliant status. Consequently, the owner would be unable to register the vehicle for the following year(s) and the next owner could not obtain registration until the vehicle is brought into compliance.

After the vehicle has been inspected and brought into compliance, and the owner or operator again makes an adjustment to make the vehicle non-compliant, such as tinting windows past the legal percentage amount, the vehicle can be stopped, warned, or cited. The officer/agency would promptly notify the NDDOT that the vehicle is no longer compliant. NDDOT will then inform the owner of the impending registration suspension due to the vehicle being out of compliance. In this case, the suspension would take effect seven days from the date of the notification letter, allowing time for receipt. Once again, a compliance inspection sheet will accompany the notification, requiring the owner to rectify the vehicle's status before the suspension can be lifted.

Operating a motor vehicle with a suspended registration constitutes a B-misdemeanor offense and may result in the vehicle being impounded.

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