



# HOUSE BILL 211: Various Division of Motor Vehicles Changes.

2019-2020 General Assembly

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<b>Committee:</b>		<b>Date:</b>	January 2, 2020
<b>Introduced by:</b>		<b>Prepared by:</b>	Wendy Ray Staff Attorney
<b>Analysis of:</b>	S.L. 2019-227		

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**OVERVIEW:** *S.L. 2019-227 makes the following changes to laws relating to motor vehicles:*

- *Amends the definitions of fuel cell and plug-in electric vehicles to clarify that they cannot have the ability to be propelled by a gasoline engine.*
- *Eliminates the requirement for a signature space on a registration card.*
- *Authorizes remote conversion of a provisional license to a regular drivers license.*
- *Requires the Division of Motor Vehicles to waive lapse in financial responsibility penalties under certain circumstances when a person has moved to another state.*
- *Provides for reflectivity standards for registration plates and requires replacement of plates every seven years.*
- *Amends the helmet requirement exception for motorcycles.*
- *Provides for a study of the feasibility of digital license plates.*

*This act became effective September 27, 2019, except for the motorcycle helmet provision, which became effective October 1, 2019, and the license plate reflectivity and replacement provisions, which become effective July 1, 2020. See full summary for specific dates related to phasing in plate replacement.*

**CURRENT LAW/BILL ANALYSIS:** This act makes changes to motor vehicle-related laws as follows:

**Electric vehicle definition clarifications.** The act amends current statutory definitions applicable to fuel cell electric and plug-in electric vehicles, to clarify that those vehicles cannot have the ability to be propelled by a gasoline engine. Fuel cell electric vehicles and plug-in electric vehicles are not required to undergo emissions inspections, nor are they subject to high occupancy vehicle lane restrictions under certain circumstances.

**Registration card signature line removal.** Prior legislation repealed the requirement for an owner to sign a motor vehicle registration card issued by the Division of Motor Vehicles. This act makes a technical correction to repeal the requirement that there be a space for the owner's signature on the registration card.

**Remote conversion of provisional license.** The act authorizes remote conversion of a full provisional license to a regular drivers license. It also provides that a full provisional license expires 60 days after the holder's 21st birthday, rather than on the 21st birthday. It also authorizes a person remotely renewing or converting a license to update his or her address.

**Insurance lapse penalty waiver for move out of state.** Current law requires the owner of a motor vehicle that is registered or is required to be registered to have a motor vehicle liability policy. If the liability policy lapses during that motor vehicle's registration period, the Division is authorized to take action as outlined in G.S. 20-311. Under current law, if a vehicle owner cancels a North Carolina liability policy in

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the process of moving out-of-state and prior to registering that same vehicle out-of-state, the owner may be assessed a penalty.

This act requires the Division to waive the monetary penalty and restoration fee for a lapse in liability insurance coverage if the owner of the vehicle meets all of the following requirements:

- The owner has become a resident of another state and has registered the owner's vehicle in that state within 30 days of the cancellation or expiration of the owner's North Carolina motor vehicle liability policy.
- The owner has submitted a copy of a current out of state registration card to the Division.
- The owner has returned the North Carolina registration plate or has submitted an affidavit indicating that the North Carolina registration plate has been lost, stolen, or destroyed.

**License plate reflectivity/replacement.** The act requires the Division to develop standards for reflectivity of registration plates that use the latest technology while maintaining a competitive bid process. It also requires the Division to replace registration plates every seven years (an existing plate must be replaced if, at the time of renewal, it is seven or more years old or will become that old during the registration period). The Division is required to coordinate with the Department of Information Technology to implement a plate production platform that integrates the registration system with on-demand plate production and provides for direct shipping of the plates. This section of the act is effective July 1, 2020, and applies to plates issued on or after that date. The Division is directed to begin replacing regular registration plates on the effective date and to begin replacing special registration plates on July 1, 2021.

**Autocycle helmet exception.** The act amends the helmet requirement for operators and passengers on autocycles. Currently, autocycles fall within the definition of motorcycle for purposes of the helmet requirement, with the specific exception that helmets are not required on autocycles with completely enclosed seating. This section of the act adds that helmets are also not required on autocycles equipped with a roll bar or roll cage. This section became effective October 1, 2019.

**Digital license plate study.** The act requires the Joint Legislative Transportation Oversight Committee to study the feasibility of making digital license plates available as an alternative to traditional physical plates issued by the Division.

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** Except as otherwise provided, the act became effective September 27, 2019.