# CHAPTER 12

## NONRESIDENT VEHICLES

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Vehicle Industry Registration Procedures

REV. September 2017
CHAPTER 12
NONRESIDENT VEHICLES

12.000 Introduction

A nonresident vehicle is a vehicle last registered in another state or country. Any vehicle based in California or primarily used on California highways must be registered in California, even if the vehicle is registered to a nonresident owner. A vehicle is considered to be primarily or regularly used on California highways if it is located or operated in this state for a greater amount of time than it is located or operated in any other individual state during the registration period (CVC §4000.4).

When California registration is required, an application for original California registration must be made within 20 days of the date registration became due to avoid penalties or 30 days from the date of sale on the Report of Sale–Used Vehicle (REG 51) form for California dealers (CVC §§4152.5 and 9553(c)(1)).

Registration becomes due:

• When a nonresident vehicle owner becomes a California resident. A person is considered a resident if California is the:
  — State where registered to vote.
  — Location of gainful employment or place of business. A person working for wages or operating a business is gainfully employed. Military personnel are not considered to be gainfully employed in California, even when they also hold a civilian job.
  — State where resident tuition is paid at a public institution of higher education.
  — Location where dependents attend a primary or secondary school.
  — State declared for homeowner’s property tax exemption.
  — Location of a property rented or leased for use as a residence.
  — Place declared as the state of residence to obtain a license or any other privilege or benefit not ordinarily extended to a nonresident.
  — State that issued the driver license in the person’s possession, except nonresident students. Refer to Nonresident Students section in this chapter.
  — Place determined to be the state of residence as evidenced by other acts, occurrences, or events that indicate presence in the state is more than temporary or transient.

• Upon entry into California, for a business with an established place of business within California and regularly using a vehicle subject to registration (CVC §6702).
12.005 Basic Registration Requirements

The following must be submitted:

- A completed Application for Title or Registration (REG 343) form.
- A California driver license or identification card (DL/ID) number for each registered owner entered on the REG 343. If an owner has not been issued a California DL/ID card, enter their out-of-state DL/ID number and print the state of issuance in the upper-right corner of the face document. Out-of-state numbers cannot be keyed into the system.

**NOTE:** A DL/ID number is not required for a business or trust. For leased vehicles, the DL/ID number is required only when the lessee is an individual.

- Evidence of ownership, as explained in the Evidence of Ownership section in this chapter. A complete chain of ownership is required, which could be:
  - The out-of-state title.
  - If the vehicle is being transferred through a dealer, the dealer may complete the dealer assignment section on the title or provide bills of sale to establish a chain of ownership.
  - A Manufacturer’s Certificate/Statement of Origin (MCO/MSO) in lieu of a title, for a vehicle purchased but not registered, outside of California.
  - The nonresident registration for a vehicle titled in one state and registered in another title-issuing state must indicate “no title issued” or show “none” in the title number box or the application must include a letter from the nonresident registration jurisdiction which verifies a title was not issued.

**NOTE:** An Arizona “registration only” certificate shows “ARO” (Arizona Registration Only) on it.

- Bills of sale(s) to establish a complete chain of ownership when the applicant is not the owner on the nonresident title or a bond may be required. Refer to Chapter 23 for bond information.

- The last issued out-of-state registration or registration renewal notice for the current year or a letter, fax, or wire from the last registration jurisdiction which verifies the registration period.
- Evidence of last registration is not required when a title indicating the last registration period is submitted as part of the application or fees are due from the date of:
  - Entry or paid from the date of entry.
  - Purchase by the transferee.
  - First retail sale for a vehicle sold by a California dealer.
- A completed Verification of Vehicle (REG 31) form.
12.005 Basic Registration Requirements, continued

— The Statement of Facts portion of the verification must be completed by the applicant for minor discrepancies in the vehicle identification number, such as “5” for “S” or “2” for “Z”.

**Exception:** A REG 31 may not be required for a new commercial vehicle or new trailer purchased in another state, as explained in the Vehicle Verification Exceptions section of this chapter.

- The odometer mileage disclosure on a complying title or a Vehicle/Vessel Transfer and Reassignment Form (REG 262) form, as appropriate. Although encouraged for all vehicles, odometer disclosure is not required for:
  — Any vehicle 10 years old or older.
  — A commercial vehicle with an unladen weight in excess of 8,500 pounds.
  — A vehicle sold directly by the manufacturer to a U.S. government agency.

**Note:** Key the mileage reading and code for odometer disclosure forms submitted for one of the above vehicles.

- A REG 51 for California dealer sales.
- A weight certificate for a commercial vehicle. A weight certificate is not required if the vehicle:
  — Was previously registered in California and no changes have been made to the vehicle; however, the owner must complete a Statement of Facts (REG 256) form certifying this fact.
  — Is a two or three-axle motor vehicle weighing 10,001 pounds or more; however, a REG 256 with the estimated weight is required.
  — Weighs less than 6,001 pounds unladen, empty, scale, or tare weight, as indicated on the nonresident title or registration.
  — Weighs 6,000 pounds or less, weight with wheels (WT/Wheels) as indicated on the New Mexico Certificates of Title and vehicle registration.
  — Is a trailer or semitrailer being registered under the Permanent Trailer Identification (PTI) program; however, a REG 256 with the estimated weight is required.
- A Declaration of Gross Vehicle Weight (GVW)/Combined Gross Vehicle Weight (CGW) (REG 4008) form for commercial vehicles over 6,001 pounds, except pickups.
- A smog certification, if appropriate. The smog exemption for newer vehicles does not apply to nonresident vehicles.
- The unexpired nonresident license plates and stickers or any drive out permit or license plate(s).

**Note:** Switzerland license plates do not have an assigned expiration date and must be picked up. The license plates belong to the Swiss government, not the vehicle or owner.

- Appropriate fees and use tax, if due.
12.005 Basic Registration Requirements, *continued*

Be sure to carry brands, such as salvage or junk, forward from nonresident certificates to the California record to brand California certificates.

**Additional Information/Requirements**—The following must be considered:

**Motorcycles-1978 and Newer Year Models**—1978 and newer year model motorcycles with an engine size of 50cc or larger must have an emission label affixed to the motorcycle with the manufacturer’s certification for on-highway use in order to be registered for on-highway use. Refer to the Motorcycles—1978 and Newer Year Models section in this chapter for additional information.

**California Noncertified Vehicles (CNCV)**—Formerly known as 49-state, bear a label certifying they only meet U.S. EPA emission requirements. A CNCV cannot be registered to a California resident who acquired/purchased the vehicle with less than 7,500 odometer miles, unless they qualify for an exemption. Refer to the California Noncertified/Direct Import Vehicle Exemptions section in this chapter for exemptions/registration and to the California Noncertified/Direct Import Vehicle Registration Refusals section in this chapter for refusal procedures.

**Direct Import Vehicles**—A new direct import vehicle cannot be registered in California unless it qualifies for an exemption. A direct import vehicle is considered new if it enters California or is obtained by a California resident before it is two years old. Refer to the California Noncertified/Direct Import Vehicle Exemptions section in this chapter for exemptions to Direct Import section in this chapter for registration, and California Noncertified/Direct Import Vehicle Registration Refusals section in this chapter for refusals.

**Vehicle License Title (VLT) Stop, Reason Code 89**—When registration is refused for a California noncertified or direct import vehicle, the Technical Compliance Section (TCS) in DMV headquarters places a VLT stop, reason code 89 on the vehicle record to prevent registration at a later date.

VLT Stop, Reason Code 89 cannot be removed and the vehicle cannot be registered later. Refer to the California Noncertified Vehicles and Direct Import Vehicles Registration Refusals section in this chapter for refusal procedures.

**Exception:** If the stop was placed prior to June 16, 2004, the vehicle may be registered if the applicant states they were previously advised that registration would be allowed based on the following criteria:

- Valid evidence of exemption is submitted.
- The vehicle reenters California after being registered or titled out of state and is being registered in the name(s) of a new owner(s) and has 7,500 or more odometer miles at the time of reentry.
- The vehicle reenters California after being registered or titled out of state for one year or more and is being registered in the same owner’s name(s) and has 7,500 or more odometer miles at the time of reentry.
12.005 Basic Registration Requirements, continued

Junking a Nonresident Vehicle—If someone other than a licensed dismantler wants to junk a nonresident vehicle, refer to Chapter 7 for the requirements. When a nonresident or original (unavailable records) vehicle registration application contains an out-of-state or California Certificate of Title with a brand indicating the vehicle was previously junked or salvaged and has been revived, the $50 salvage inspection fee is not due.

Nonresident Park Trailers—Nonresident applications with documents showing the vehicle to be a park trailer are processed as usual. However, a REG 256 is required if the documents do not indicate the vehicle is a park trailer. The REG 256 must certify the vehicle is a park trailer and give its dimensions (width and length from the foremost point of the hitch to the rear of the trailer body).

Applicants unable or unwilling to complete a REG 256 may be referred to the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) for completion of the REG 256 by HCD personnel. Applicants referred to HCD may be required for a physical inspection of the vehicle and that HCD may charge a fee for the inspection.

International Traffic Vehicles—These are heavy duty commercial vehicles which are allowed to import and/or pick up merchandise and leave as expeditiously as possible. They enter California for the sole purpose of doing business and do not intend to remain here. Proof of insurance and interstate commercial registration must be verified. Note insurance and initial on the front of the application.

Commercial Vehicles Base-Plated in Mexico or Newfoundland—If the vehicle weighs more than 7,000 pounds unladen, proof of insurance from a company authorized to do business in California is required. These vehicles must have interstate registration. Minimum insurance coverage for these vehicles is:

- $250,000 public liability per person.
- $500,000 public liability per accident.
- $100,000 property damage.
- $600,000 combined total coverage.

Additional coverage is required for commercial vehicles hauling petroleum or hazardous waste (CVC §16500.5 and California Public Utilities Code §3631).

12.010 California Highway Patrol (CHP) Californians Help Eliminate all the Evasive Registration Scofflaws (CHEATERS) Program (CVC §§4000–4000.4)

Because California experiences significant revenue losses when residents illegally register their vehicles in foreign jurisdictions, on April 30, 2004, the CHP implemented CHEATERS, an online enforcement program which invites the public to assist in identifying vehicles that may be improperly registered, by reporting nonresident vehicles to CHP at www.chp.ca.gov. Customers wishing to report vehicles should be referred to this website.
12.010 California Highway Patrol (CHP) Californians Help Eliminate all the Evasive Registration Scofflaws (CHEATERS) Program, continued

CHP evaluates the information on reported vehicles and sends a letter to the vehicle owner. Applications which result from having received a CHP letter and/or having a vehicle license title (VLT) stop, are processed as usual following the procedures in the Basic Registration Requirements section in this chapter, or if interstate (dual) registration is requested, the Out-of-State California Resident section in this chapter.

If customers have questions regarding this program, advise them to contact CHP online at www.chp.ca.gov or by mail at:

California Highway Patrol
Office of Public Affairs
PO Box 942898
Sacramento, CA 94298-0001

12.015 California Noncertified Vehicles

A California noncertified vehicle (CNCV), formerly known as 49-state, is manufactured to be first sold in all states, except California, and meets only federal emission standards. A CNCV cannot be registered to a California resident who purchased the vehicle with less than 7,500 miles unless the owner qualified for an exemption. Refer to the CNCV/Direct Import Vehicle Exemptions section in this chapter for exemptions and to the California Noncertified/Direct Import Vehicle Registration Referrals section in this chapter for refusals.

12.020 California Noncertified/Direct Import Vehicle Exemptions

To obtain California registration, new California noncertified vehicles (CNCV) (formerly known as 49-state), must either have California emission equipment or certified to federal emissions standards to qualify for an exemption.

To register a CNCV with less than 7,500 miles, that is only equipped to meet federal emissions standards, vehicle owner must certify to one of the exemptions on the Statement of Facts California Non-Certified Vehicle or New/Used Direct Import Vehicle (REG 256F) form:

- They inherited the vehicle or were awarded the vehicle in a divorce, dissolution, or legal separation, and the vehicle is certified to federal emissions standards.
- They purchased the vehicle vehicle (out of state) to replace a California – registered vehicle (in their name) which was damaged or became inoperative beyond reasonable repair, or was stolen (submit a copy of registration, the repair estimates, or police report) while they were out of state and the vehicle is certified to federal emissions standards.
12.020 California Noncertified/Direct Import Vehicle Exemptions, continued

- When they acquired the vehicle they were a resident, or on active military duty, in another state where the vehicle was last registered and is certified to federal emissions standards.
- Emergency and certain other vehicles, as noted in the California Vehicle Code Sections 27156.2 and 27156.3, must be certified to federal emissions standards.
- The vehicle’s engine displacement is less than 50 cubic centimeters.

For a used direct import vehicle more than two years old upon date of entry through 1975 year model and not equipped to meet federal or California emission standards to be registered in California, the applicant must certify to one of the following exemptions on a REG 256F:

- When they acquired the vehicle they were a resident of, or on active military duty in, another state for at least one year where the vehicle was last registered. The vehicle must have been certified under a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Certificate of Conformity and issued an approval letter from the U.S. Department of Transportation.
- The vehicle’s engine displacement is less than 50 cubic centimeters.

The following must be submitted:

- A completed REG 256F certifying to the applicable exemption.
- Documented evidence of exemption.
- All documents required for registration as shown in the Basic Registration Requirements section in this chapter, and if a direct import vehicle, all documents shown in the Direct Import Vehicles section in this chapter.

If the vehicle cannot be registered because the applicant does not qualify for an exemption:
- Do not collect any fees.
- Pick up any temporary operating permit (TOP) or inventory issued (CVC §42230).
- Advise the applicant that the vehicle must be removed from the state. The applicant may purchase a One Trip Permit (REG 402) or be issued a Vehicle Moving Permit (REG 172) to remove the vehicle from California.
- Fax the Application for Title or Registration (REG 343) form, Verification of Vehicle (REG 31) form and a copy of the titling documents to TCS at (916) 657-6763 for placement of a VLT Stop Reason Code 89 on the vehicle record.
12.025  **California Noncertified/Direct Import Vehicle Registration Refusals (CH&SC §§43150 – 43156)**

California noncertified vehicles (CNCV), formerly known as 49-state, meet only U.S. EPA emission requirements and are so labeled. California residents who acquire a CNCV, truck, with less than 7,500 odometer miles at the time acquired cannot register the vehicle in California unless the owner qualifies for an exemption.

New direct import vehicles acquired by California residents can only be registered in California if the owner qualifies for an exemption. Refer to the California Noncertified Vehicles and Direct Import Vehicles Exemptions section in this chapter.

California registration fees are due immediately upon transfer of a nonresident vehicle from the owner shown on the nonresident documents. Penalties accrue if the fees are not paid within 20 days after the new owner’s date of purchase or 30 days from the new owner’s date of purchase, if sold by a California dealer.

12.030  **Change of Registered Owner**

**Deceased Owners—Joint Tenants With Right of Survivorship (JTWROS)**—When a nonresident vehicle is registered to co-owners as JTWROS, and one owner becomes deceased, the surviving owner may obtain California registration in his or her name by submitting the regular nonresident clearance requirements and a death certificate for the deceased owner.

**Letters of Administration or Letters Testamentary**—Letters of Administration or Letters Testamentary issued in California or another state may be used to release ownership on an out-of-state title. The vehicle does not have to be transferred to the heir in the other state prior to obtaining California registration.

**Transfer Without Probate**—An application for Transfer without Probate cannot be accepted for any vehicle that is not titled in California. Out-of-state titling documents must be transferred to the heir in the state of origin prior to obtaining California registration.

12.035  **Commercial Vehicles (CVC §6852)**

**Reciprocity Granted**—The nonresident owner of a foreign commercial vehicle is granted the same privileges and freedom from registration and payment of fees imposed by the *California Vehicle Code* (CVC) as the foreign jurisdiction in which the vehicle is registered/licensed grants to like vehicles registered under this code or as provided in reciprocity agreements, arrangements, or declarations made commencing with CVC §8000.
Reciprocity between California and other states is based upon:
- Agreements and arrangements completed between the Reciprocity Commission or the International Registration Plan Agreement and authorized representatives of other states.
- Declarations by the Reciprocity Commission.

The conditions of reciprocity are indicated in the following chart.

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<tr>
<th>If the Nonresident Vehicle Is a</th>
<th>The Vehicle</th>
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<td>Commercial vehicle from a state which does not have interstate reciprocity</td>
<td>Is subject to fees from the date of entry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial vehicle that operates interstate</td>
<td>Is subject to registration in California. <strong>EXCEPTION:</strong> Vehicles base-plated in Hawaii.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial vehicle from a state with which California has interstate reciprocity</td>
<td>May enter California and be parked without fees becoming due. Any subsequent interstate operation causes fees to be due immediately. <strong>EXCEPTION:</strong> Vehicles base-plated in Hawaii.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Commercial vehicle registered as an automobile in the owner’s home state | • Is to be treated as an automobile for the purpose of determining when registration is required.  
• Would not be always subject to fees due on the date of entry. Many states register pickups as autos, not as commercial vehicles, and, in most cases, fees will be due on the date of residency. |
| Commercial vehicle registered as an automobile in the owner’s home state | • Is to be treated as an automobile for the purpose of determining when registration is required.  
• Would not be always subject to fees due on the date of entry. Many states register pickups as autos, not as commercial vehicles, and, in most cases, fees will be due on the date of residency. |
| Recreational vehicle | Is to be treated as an automobile for the purpose of determining when registration is required even if the vehicle is registered as a commercial vehicle in the home state. |
12.035 Commercial Vehicles, continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If the Nonresident Vehicle Is a</th>
<th>The Vehicle</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Station wagon</td>
<td>Is to be treated as a noncommercial vehicle for the purpose of determining when registration is required even if the vehicle is registered as a commercial vehicle in the home state.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Commercial vehicle base-plated in Mexico or Newfoundland | Must obtain full-year registration (CVC §9711). Interstate registration may be issued in conjunction with full-year registration.  
**NOTE:** Mexico and Newfoundland do not have reciprocity agreements with California. |

12.040 Definitions

**50-State Vehicle**—A vehicle that meets U.S. EPA and California emission and safety standards and is so labeled. These vehicles may be registered regardless of the odometer mileage.

**California Noncertified Vehicles (CNCV)** — Formerly known as 49-state vehicle, is a vehicle manufactured to be first sold in all states except California and meets only federal emission standards. These vehicles cannot be registered to a California resident who acquired or purchased the vehicle with less than 7,500 odometer miles unless the owner qualifies for an exemption.

**California Resident (CVC §516)**—Any person who manifests an intent to live or be located in this state on more than a temporary or transient basis. Presence in the state for six months or more in any 12-month period gives rise to a rebuttable presumption of residency.

**California Vehicle**—A vehicle manufactured and certified to meet California emission standards and intended for first sale in California. New and used California vehicles may be registered regardless of odometer mileage.
12.040 Definitions

**Direct Import Vehicle**—A vehicle that is not manufactured to meet U.S. federal safety requirements and/or U.S. or California emission standards and not intended by the manufacturer to be used or sold in the United States.

**Nonresident**—A person who is not a resident of California. For example, visitors or representatives of another state or country and military personnel who are residents of other states (CVC §435).

**Nonresident Military Personnel**—Any nonresident owner of a vehicle registered in a foreign state who is a member or spouse of a member of the U.S. Armed Forces on active duty within this state. Any person on continuous active duty in the Air Force, Army, Navy, Marines, or Coast Guard is considered to be military personnel. This does not include civilian personnel employed by a branch of the armed forces (CVC §6701).

**Nonresident Vehicle**—A vehicle that was last registered in another state or country.

12.045 Determining the Date Fees Become Due

When California registration fees become due on a nonresident vehicle:

- Penalties are due if the fees are not paid within 20 days of the date they became due. (CVC §4152.5)

- Prior fees and/or penalties cannot be collected on the assumption that they were due at an earlier date.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If the RO Is</th>
<th>And the Nonresident Vehicle</th>
<th>Then Fees Become Due on</th>
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| New (changing ownership) | Was sold by a California-licensed dealer | The date of first retail sale.  
**Note:** California dealers have 30 days from the date of sale on the REG 51 to submit fees **without** penalty (CVC §9553c.1). |
| Was purchased outside of California | | The date of entry. |
| Was acquired or purchased in California,  
**Note:** If the vehicle was brought into California by someone other than the applicant/purchaser; the date of entry must be shown, or if unknown, “unknown” must be printed | | The date of purchase.  
**Exception:** Fees were posted recently on a report of deposit of fees (RDF) for a nonresident application (type transaction code[TTC] B00) by a prior owner. |
### 12.045 Determining the Date Fees Become Due, *continued*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If the RO Is And the Nonresident Vehicle</th>
<th>Then Fees Become Due on</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| The same (no ownership change) Is currently registered out of state | Whichever of the following occurs first:  
  • The date residency is established (refer to this chapter).  
  • The date after the out-of-state registration expires.  
  • The date of entry, if owner is already a California resident.  
  **EXCEPTION:** Fees for commercial vehicles are due upon date of entry, unless registered as an auto in the former state. |
| The same (no ownership change) Was not currently registered upon entry into California or no proof of current registration can be provided, **NOTE:** Must have proof of nonresident registration, nonresident title, or a letter from the motor vehicle division | Whichever of the following occurs later:  
  • The date of entry.  
  • The date after the out-of-state registration expires. |
| Is a commercial vehicle registered as a commercial vehicle in the last state of registration (refer to Commercial Vehicle section in this chapter) | The date of entry unless the vehicle is currently registered and was parked without fees becoming due.  
  **NOTE:** If parked, fees become due on whichever of the following occurs first:  
  • The date of first operation.  
  • The date following expiration of the out-of-state registration.  
  The applicant must apply for registration or planned nonoperation (PNO) prior to the vehicle’s out-of-state registration expiration to avoid penalties or fees/penalties. |
### 12.045 Determining the Date Fees Become Due, continued

<table>
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<tr>
<th>If the RO Is</th>
<th>And the Nonresident Vehicle</th>
<th>Then Fees Become Due on</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A nonresident active duty military service member or their nonresident spouse (refer to appropriate sections in this chapter)</td>
<td>Is <strong>not</strong> currently registered in their home state or state of last duty station</td>
<td>The date of entry.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| | Is **currently** registered in their home state or state of last duty station | Whichever of the following occurs first:  
- The date after the current registration expires.  
- The date after discharge from military service.  
- The date the application is **completed**. |
| **NOTE:** Active duty military personnel may renew their vehicle’s registration in their home state instead of registering in California. |
| A California resident or a California business | Has *not* entered California, but the applicant wishes to initiate California registration | Whichever of the following occurs first:  
- The date of entry.  
- The date the application is **completed**. |
| **NOTE:** since the system will not accept future dates, if the applicant starts the process to register and the application is RDF’s, change the date fees due upon return of the application to one of the above. |
| A nonresident (individual or business) | Has **not** entered California | No date, because the application **cannot** be started when the applicant is a nonresident and the vehicle has not entered California. |
| A nonresident (individual or business) having an established place of business in California | Is being used in California | The date of entry. |

For vehicles brought into California by someone other than the applicant/purchaser, the:
- Date of entry **must** show “unknown.”
- Fees are due from the date of purchase **unless** it can be determined from the application documents that fees became due at an earlier date. **EXAMPLE:** When multiple transfers have occurred.
**12.050 Direct Import Vehicles**

Direct imports are vehicles which have been imported and originally manufactured for use in other countries. These vehicles may have foreign emission and/or safety labels, or no labels.

A Vehicle Identification Number Analysis (VINA) validation determines when a vehicle is a direct import (grey market) vehicle.

**Note:** The *Direct Import Guidebook* is obsolete. Polk’s Canadian and International Registration Manual has information on foreign documents and registration requirements previously found in the *Direct Import Guidebook*.

**Registration and/or Titling Requirements—The following must be submitted:**

- The basic nonresident registration documentation outlined in the Basic Registration Requirements section in this chapter.
- Evidence or documentation to prove that the vehicle was imported legally and cleared U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP). CBP forms 7501, 3461, 6059, 3299, or 3311, stamped or endorsed by CBP are acceptable. This does not apply to U.S. territories.
- Evidence that the vehicle was modified to meet Department of Transportation (DOT) Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (FMVSS). This may be FMVSS labels affixed to the vehicle or a letter from the manufacturer certifying the vehicle meets FMVSS requirements.
- Evidence that the vehicle was modified to meet U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) standards and requirements. This may be a label affixed to the vehicle or letter from the manufacturer stating the vehicle meets U.S. EPA requirements.

**Note:** Manufacturers may certify to FMVSS and EPA requirements on the same letter.

- If the vehicle is less than two years old, a certificate of conformance from a California Air Resources Board (CARB) authorized laboratory.
- A smog certificate, if required.
- If the application is for registration of a 1968 year model or newer auto or commercial vehicle or a 1978 year model or newer motorcycle that does not comply with:
  - U.S. emission requirements, refer the applicant to CARB at 1-800-242-4450 or by e-mail at helpline@www.arb.ca.gov.
  - FMVSS, refer the applicant to the manufacturer to obtain a letter stating the vehicle meets FMVSS.

All references for direct import vehicles indicating “1966 year-model or newer auto or commercial vehicles” should be “1968 year-model or newer auto or commercial vehicles” in accordance with federal regulations.

When an application for direct import vehicles is submitted:

- **Do not** accept a REG 256F, REV. 8/2016 or prior revisions.
- Inform the applicant the exemptions are not applicable to direct import vehicles.
12.050 Direct Import Vehicles, continued

**Note:** There are no CARB programs to convert new vehicles (less than two years old), motorcycles, off-highway vehicles (OHV), and diesel-powered vehicles to California emission standards. Vehicles that cannot be converted to comply with U.S. safety and U.S. and/or California emission standards cannot be registered for on-highway or off-highway use.

Refer customers who have questions or need assistance about direct import vehicles to TCS at (916) 657-6795, CARB at 1-800-242-4450, or the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration at www.nhtsa.gov.

12.055 Evidence of Ownership

**Nonresident Title**—The original nonresident title is required to register and title a nonresident vehicle in California. A duplicate copy showing the current license number and the registered owner’s name may be used in applications for nontitle (goldenrod) registration only.

**Non-Title State**—In general, other states issue titles on most motor vehicles and trailers. However, titles may not be issued for some older vehicles and/or certain trailers. **Example:** Connecticut does not require issuance of a Connecticut title on vehicles manufactured prior to 1981. Ownership is transferred using a Connecticut Supplemental Assignment of Ownership (CT DMV form Q-1) form and a copy of the Connecticut registration.

**Notarization Requirements**—The signatures on a nonresident title or a nonresident certificate of origin are not required to be notarized, even if the nonresident title contains provisions for notarization upon transfer. Accept the nonresident owner’s signature on the title or a bill of sale to the new owner.

**Title State**—Evidence of ownership must be the title, endorsed by the owner to the purchaser, if the vehicle is being transferred. Otherwise, bills of sale must be submitted in lieu of the signature(s) on the title.

**Note:** The surviving owner of a nonresident vehicle registered to co-owners as Joint Tenants with Right of Survivorship may obtain California registration in their name by submitting a death certificate for the deceased owner in addition to the usual nonresident clearance requirements.

Any legal owner/lienholder shown on the REG 343 must be the same as is shown on the nonresident title, unless the application includes one of the following:

- A lien marked “paid” and countersigned by the legal owner on the out-of-state title.
- The legal owner’s signature on the legal owner release line of the out-of-state title.
- A lien satisfied, such as a Lien Satisfied/Legal Holder/Titleholder Release (REG 166) form.
12.055 Evidence of Ownership, continued

- The original or a certified copy of the conditional sales contract or security interest, showing the name(s) of the purchaser and lienholder, marked “paid” and countersigned.

If the vehicle was not registered in the applicant’s name before being brought into California, the nonresident title must be:

- Properly endorsed by the registered and legal owners shown on the title. Bills of sale and a lien satisfied from the legal owner may be accepted in lieu of signatures on the title to establish a complete chain of ownership from the registered owner shown on the out-of-state title to the applicant.
- Signed by the applicant as purchaser.

Acceptable Evidence of Ownership When a Title Was not Issued—The following must be submitted:

- A REG 256 from the applicant stating the vehicle is free and clear of any liens other than shown on the application and one of the following:
  - Bill of sale or dealer invoice to the registered owner named on the out-of-state registration that shows no lien against the vehicle and indicates the vehicle was paid in full.
  - The original or certified copy of a conditional sales contract that shows the same lien as shown on the REG 343 or which has been stamped/marked “paid” and countersigned or is cleared by a lien satisfied (a REG 166 is acceptable).
  - Title from a different nonresident jurisdiction or a letter from the nontitle state verifying the title was surrendered to that state unless the out-of-state registration indicates the title was surrendered.
- Bills of sale to establish a complete chain of ownership from the registered owner shown on the out-of-state registration to the applicant, including any dealers, for a vehicle not registered in the applicant’s name in the other state.

**Note:** The original or certified copy of a dealer invoice may be substituted for a bill of sale provided it describes the vehicle, gives the name and address of the dealer and the name of the buyer(s), and is either stamped/marked “paid” and countersigned or indicates the same lienholder as shown on the REG 343.

**Foreign Country Title Documents**—A vehicle previously registered in a foreign country may be registered in California using the foreign title documents.

12.060 Interstate Registration (CVC §4303)

Interstate registration allows a vehicle owner to register a vehicle in California and still retain valid out-of-state registration. It does not prevent any vehicle from being registered in California on a nontransferable (goldenrod) basis. Generally, interstate registration is for nonresident commercial vehicles operating in more than one state without reciprocity. However, automobiles may also be registered on an interstate basis. California residents may obtain interstate registration for vehicles registered in another state, but a California resident who is exempt from registering in another state should not be encouraged to pay fees to both states.
12.060 Interstate Registration, continued

Registration Requirements—The following must be submitted:
• A completed an REG 343.
• A REG 31 verification must show the motive power.
• A smog certification, if appropriate.
• A weight certificate, if a commercial vehicle. A weight certificate is not required if the vehicle:
  — Was previously registered in California and no changes have been made to the vehicle; however, the owner must complete a REG 256 certifying this fact.
  — Is a two-axle or three-axle motor vehicle weighing 10,001 or more pounds; however, a REG 256 with the estimated weight is required.
  — Weighs less than 6,001 pounds unladen, empty, scale, or tare weight, as indicated on the nonresident title or registration.
  — Is a trailer or semitrailer being registered under the Permanent Trailer Identification (PTI) program; however, a REG 256 with the estimated weight is required.
• A REG 4008 for commercial vehicles over 6,001 pounds, except pickups.
• Full-year registration fees and use tax, if due.

Interstate Registration Renewals—Interstate registration is renewed the same as other California registration. The nonresident registration is not inspected for renewal.

Vehicles Registered in Mexico or Newfoundland may be issued interstate registration under the following conditions:
• Commercial vehicles over 7,000 pounds unladen must submit proof of insurance by an insurance company authorized to do business in California.

• Insurance coverage must be in the amounts specified below. Additional coverage is required for commercial vehicles hauling petroleum or hazardous waste (CVC §16500.5 and California Public Utilities Code §3631).
  — $250,000 Public Liability Per Person.
  — $500,000 Public Liability Per Accident.
  — $100,000 Property Damage.
  — $600,000 Combined Total Coverage

International Traffic Vehicles—There are additional clearance requirements for international traffic vehicles. These are heavy duty commercial vehicles which are allowed to import and/or pick up merchandise and leave as expeditiously as possible. They enter California for the sole purpose of doing business and do not intend to remain here.
12.060 Interstate Registration, continued

**Note:** Light weight pickup trucks and/or automobiles are not included in this classification. These vehicles are subject to normal registration requirements.

The owner/driver of an international traffic vehicle must present proof of insurance from a company authorized to do business in California and obtain interstate registration.

12.065 Interstate Registration Conversion to Regular Registration

The requirements for conversion from interstate registration to regular registration are the same as for conversion of goldenrod registration shown in the Nontitle (Goldenrod) Registration Conversion to California Title section in this chapter, except that the current nonresident registration and foreign plates must be surrendered.

12.070 Leased Vehicles (CVC §6853)

A vehicle leased from a nonresident owner by a person who resides, or has an established place of business in California for use on California highways, must be registered here unless specifically exempted from registration under CVC §6850. Nonresident commercial vehicles leased to a California resident are subject to California registration from the date of first use in California, conditioned upon reciprocity. California registration becomes due when the vehicle is under lease and in operation by the lessee. In such cases, make a notation on the application “Fees assessed from first use by California lessee—not from date of entry.”

12.075 Lost Applications (CVC §1651)

Reconstruct any nonresident registration application (clearing or suspense) that is lost after being sent to DMV headquarters and issue certificates with the least possible inconvenience to the customer.

The following must be submitted:

- A completed an REG 343.
- Evidence of the original transaction (receipt, etc.).
- A completed REG 31.
- A photocopy of the REG 51 or the operating copy, if vehicle was sold by a dealer.
- The odometer disclosure statement, Vehicle/Vessel Transfer and Reassignment Form (REG 262), or photocopy.
- For commercial vehicles, a photocopy or carbon copy of the weight certificate. If a copy is not available, but the vehicle weight can be determined from a breakdown of the fees paid, accept a REG 256 certifying to the unladen weight of the vehicle in lieu of a new weight certificate.
- A smog inspection, if needed. If the electronic smog certification cannot be verified from the vehicle record, the customer’s vehicle inspection report (VIR) is required.
12.075 Lost Applications, continued

- Photocopies of any other original documents submitted, if possible.
- A REG 256 certifying:
  - The out-of-state title was or was not surrendered and California certificates were not received.
  - Where the vehicle was last registered and the approximate registration expiration date unless fees were collected based on the purchase date.
  - There are no liens against the vehicle other than shown on the application.
  - The weight certificate (for commercial vehicles) was included with the application giving the unladen weight and number of axles.
- Any fees due.

12.080 Military Personnel (CVC §6701)

Military personnel, including California residents, who are military members or the nonresident spouse of a member of the U.S. Armed Forces returning from active duty in a foreign state and military and civilian members of NATO who are not citizens of the United States are permitted to operate a vehicle (including trailer coaches) in California with valid license plates from either the:

- Individual’s home state or country.
- State or country where the individual was regularly assigned and stationed when the license plates were issued.

**Note:** For military personnel assigned to Washington, D.C., consider Maryland or Virginia the state where stationed.

The requirements are:

- The vehicle must be owned by the military member or their spouse.
- The vehicle must be currently registered.
- The vehicle must display valid license plates issued to the military person or their spouse by the foreign jurisdiction where the military person was last regularly assigned and stationed for duty by military orders or by a jurisdiction claimed as the permanent state of residence by the nonresident military person.
- The vehicle cannot be a commercial vehicle used in a business manner from which the military member or their spouse receives compensation.

**Note:** Military orders do not include military orders for leave, for temporary duty, or for any other assignment of any nature requiring the military person’s presence outside the foreign jurisdiction where the owner was regularly assigned and stationed for duty.

- If the vehicle is a motor vehicle, the owner or driver has in force one of the forms of financial responsibility specified in CVC §16021.

**Note:** Officers of the Public Health Service are entitled to all rights, privileges, immunities, and benefits provided under the Soldiers and Sailors Relief Act of 1940. They do not have to be on duty with the U.S. Armed Forces.

Refer to the Determining the Date Fees Become Due section in this chapter for procedures.
12.085 Military Personnel—Discharged (CVC §6703)

Any person who enters California after being discharged from the U.S. Armed Forces is exempt from California registration for passenger vehicles, trailer coaches, and utility trailers provided the vehicle has valid out-of-state plates and registration.

Registration fees become due when the person accepts gainful employment in California or becomes a California resident and must be paid within 20 days following that date to avoid penalties (CVC §4152.5).

12.090 Military Personnel-Owned Commercial Vehicles (CVC §6701)

Military personnel may operate a commercial vehicle owned by the military person without obtaining California registration for the vehicle provided it bears valid registration in the owner’s home state or the state of military assignment at the time of registration, and it is not used in a trade or business.

**Exception:** Any commercial vehicle owned by military personnel used in any business manner wherein the military person receives compensation is subject to California registration (CVC §6701(c)).

12.095 Military Personnel—Signature by Relative (CVC §1651)

The registration application for a nonresident vehicle being registered to an owner who is in the U.S. Armed Forces may be signed by the owner’s spouse or other close relative.

The owner’s signature must:
- Be countersigned by the relative.
- Have the relationship to the individual indicated.

12.100 Motorcycles—1978 and Newer Year Models

The California Air Resources Board (CARB) established regulations for on-highway motorcycles beginning with 1978 year models.

Motorcycles with less than 7,500 miles that are 2006 year model and newer, with an engine displacement of less that 50 cubic centimeters (cc), and an emissions label indicating the motorcycle meets U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) standards for on-highway use should not be refused based on the California noncertified vehicle registration refusal guidelines.

**Important:** Only a REG 31 completed by an authorized DMV employee is acceptable on an application for on-highway (street) motorcycle registration of any motor vehicle currently registered as an off-highway vehicle (OHV) or titled with type license “C2” (title only). A REG 31 verification completed by other than a DMV employee is not accepted.
### 12.100 Motorcycles—1978 and Newer Year Models, *continued*

The following chart is to determine a motorcycle’s eligibility for on-highway registration:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If The Motorcycle Is a</th>
<th>The Motorcycle May</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New motorcycle submitted on an Application for Registration of New Vehicle (REG 397)</td>
<td>Be registered for on-highway use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977 year model or older</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978 year model or newer with an emissions label indicating it meets U.S. EPA and California standards for on-highway use or California Standards only for on-highway use</td>
<td>Be registered for on-highway use, regardless of mileage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978 year model and newer with an emissions label indicating off-road or off-highway use only</td>
<td>Not be registered for on-highway use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978 year model and newer with an engine displacement of 50 cc and larger without an emissions label</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978 through 1981 year models, with an engine displacement of 50 cc and larger and an emissions label indicating it meets U.S. EPA standards only</td>
<td>Be registered for on-highway use (<em>California Code of Regulations</em>, Title 13 §1958(d)).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982 year model and newer with an engine displacement of 50 cc and larger and an emissions label indicating it meets U.S. EPA standards only</td>
<td>Be registered for on-highway use, unless it has less than 7,500 miles on the odometer (California noncertified).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005 year model and older with an engine displacement of less that 50 cc</td>
<td>Be registered for on-highway use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006 year model and newer with an engine displacement of less than 50 cc with an emissions label indicating it meets U.S. EPA standards for on-highway use</td>
<td>Be registered for on-highway use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006 year model and newer with an engine displacement of less than 50 cc without a U.S. EPA emissions label</td>
<td>Not be registered for on-highway use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specially constructed (SPCNS) vehicle</td>
<td>Not be registered for on-highway use, if the motorcycle meets the definition of SPCNS (CVC §580).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** Any motorcycle or vehicle originally manufactured for off-highway use cannot be converted for on-highway use, unless it is manufactured for dual purposes.

**Important:** If a motorcycle’s engine bears a small off-road engine (SORE) label, refer to the Original OHV Registration Applications section in Chapter 15.
12.105 Nonresident Military (NRM) Exemption (50 United States Code §574)

An NRM service member on active duty in California and spouse who lives with the service member qualifies for the NRM vehicle license fee (VLF) exemption on any vehicle or trailer coach, provided the vehicle is:

- Registered in the name of the NRM service member, their nonresident spouse, or both.
- Not operated for hire.

Military Personnel ID Verification—All branches of the U.S. Armed Forces (or Uniformed Services) issue a photo military identification (ID) card to military personnel and their dependents. The NRM member is the “sponsor” named on the dependent’s ID.

- Members of the Uniformed Services must present valid (not expired) military ID showing active duty status. The NRM must be the registered owner or lessee of the vehicle.
- Dependents of Uniformed Services members must present valid (not expired) military ID showing active duty status for the sponsor. The sponsor must be the registered owner or lessee of the vehicle.

NATO Members—A member of a force or civilian component of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) who is not a citizen of the United States is also entitled to the VLF exemption privilege. To receive the exemption, a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO Status of Forces Agreement) (REG 5046) form completed by the applicant must be submitted with the application and the applicant’s identity must be verified if the application is presented in person.

NATO’s 18 Country Members:

- Belgium
- Canada
- Czech Republic
- Denmark
- France
- Germany
- Greece
- Hungary
- Iceland
- Italy
- Luxembourg
- Netherlands
- Norway
- Poland
- Portugal
- Spain
- Turkey
- United Kingdom

NATO Members ID Verification

- A member of a force of a NATO country must present both of the following:
  - A personal ID card issued by the member’s home NATO country showing their name, date of birth, service organization, and a photograph.
  - Movement orders in the language of the member’s home NATO country and English certifying they were ordered to be in California.
12.105 Nonresident Military (NRM) Exemption, continued

**NOTE:** Movement orders (assignment documents) can be from any one of the 18 NATO countries listed in this section, so the documents do not have a common format. Review each document to ensure it identifies the applicant, the member country, and the applicant’s assignment to duty in California.

- A civilian member of a country that is a member of NATO must show a valid passport from their home country that describes their status.

**The following must be submitted:**

- A Nonresident Military Exemption Statement (REG 5045) form completed by the NRM service member or spouse.
- If the application is presented in person, a military ID for the NRM or spouse.
- If the application is submitted by a dealer or registration service, a copy of the military ID of the NRM or spouse.
- If the application is submitted by mail, verification of ID is not required.

**NOTE:** NRM service member stationed in California may apply for the NRM exemption and also file a California homeowner’s exemption for an owner occupied residence. The NRM spouse VLF exemption does not apply to service member spouses who are already California residents, even when married to an NRM service member.

12.110 Nonresident License Plates Used by Resident Business (CVC §6702)

Every nonresident, including any foreign corporation, having an established place of business within California, and regularly using a vehicle of a type subject to registration, must immediately register the vehicle upon entry into this state.

12.115 Nonresident Title Only—Not Currently Registered

Refer to the Basic Registration Requirements section in this chapter for registration of a vehicle issued title only in another state, but not registered there.

12.120 Nontitle (Goldenrod) Registration (CVC §4307)

A nontransferable nontitle (goldenrod) registration may be issued when out-of-state titling documents are not submitted at the time of application for California registration.

**The following must be submitted:**

- All registration requirements as shown in the Basic Registration Requirements section in this chapter with the exception of the title/ownership document.
- A completed REG 343 including the name of any legal owner/lienholder, whether or not it appears on the nonresident registration.
12.125 NonTitle (Goldenrod) Registration Conversion to California Title

Registered Owner Remains Same and No Lienholder is Shown—The following must be submitted:

The last-issued nonresident (or California) title and any supporting documents that may be necessary, such as a power of attorney, lien satisfied, or bill(s) of sale.

- Fees due for registration. No fee solely to convert to a California title.
- A smog certification, if appropriate.

Nonresident Title Only—Some states, such as Oregon, issue title only for a vehicle registered in California to record a vehicle lien held by a resident of that state. To obtain a California title, The following must be submitted:

The nonresident “title only.”

- A REG 256 completed by the owner stating there are no liens against the vehicle other than shown on the accompanying documents.
- Any fees due for registration. No fee solely to convert to a California title.

Transfer of Ownership—When a transfer of ownership and/or change of legal owner occurs in conjunction with conversion of a goldenrod registration to California title, The following must be submitted:

The last-issued nonresident (or California) title properly endorsed for transfer or bill(s) of sale, as needed, to establish the chain of ownership from the owner of record to the new owner/applicant.

- A REG 343 must be the top document if the title is not available or is an out-of-state title without a place for the new owner to sign (supported by bills of sale to establish a chain of ownership).
- The new legal owner’s name and address must be entered on the title.

- A release from the legal owner shown on the title, if any, in the form of:
  - A lien marked “paid” and countersigned by the legal owner on the out-of-state title.
  - The legal owner’s signature on the legal owner release line of the out-of-state title.
  - A lien satisfied, such as a REG 166.
  - The original or a certified copy of the conditional sales contract or security interest, showing the name(s) of the purchaser and lienholder, marked “paid” and countersigned.
- The last-issued California goldenrod registration, if available.
- A smog certification, if appropriate.
- A transfer fee and any other fees due.

**Note:** A transfer fee is not due when a title from the state of Washington is presented for a goldenrod conversion because Washington issues a clear title to the registered owner when the lien is satisfied.
12.130 **Nontitle (Goldenrod) Registration With a Name Change**

A goldenrod registration application must reflect the name of the owner as it appears on the nonresident registration card. However, both the previous and current values may be listed on the registration card. This provides continuity of ownership when the outstanding title is later presented and complies with the department’s true name requirements.

The following must be submitted:

- All registration requirements as shown in the Basic Registration Requirements section in this chapter with the exception of the title/ownership document.
- A REG 256 with the Name Statement section completed.

Refer to the Nontitle (Goldenrod) Registration section in this chapter for additional information.

12.135 **Out-of-State California Resident**

A California resident located out of state may register their vehicle in California.

The following must be submitted:

- The documentation listed in the Basic Registration Requirements section in this chapter.
- A vehicle verification completed by a regularly employed peace officer from the state in which the vehicle is located. The odometer mileage must be recorded.

**Note:** Any authorized California vehicle verifier, including a peace officer, can complete a REG 31 including the emission label verification.

- For commercial vehicles, a weighmaster’s weight certification that contains the:
  - Vehicle identification number.
  - Unladen weight of the vehicle.
  - Name, address, and signature of the person making the certification.
- A REG 256:
  - Showing the applicant’s California address.
  - Certifying they are a bona fide resident of California.
  - Stating the vehicle is equipped to meet California emission control standards or will be equipped when the vehicle enters California.

**Note:** California noncertified vehicles and motorcycles with less than 7,500 odometer miles cannot be registered in California unless they are California-certified. Refer to the Basic Registration Requirements and California Noncertified/ Direct Import Vehicles Registration Refusals sections in this chapter for additional information.

- Registration fees from the date of application.
12.140 Previous Registration in California

Some nonresident vehicles may have been previously registered in California within DMVs four-year file retention period.

The following must be submitted:

- A REG 343 completed as shown in the Basic Registration Requirements section in this chapter.
- The last-issued nonresident registration as shown in the Basic Registration Requirements section in this chapter.
- Evidence of ownership. If the vehicle is registered in a:
  - **Title-Issuing State:** The title from that state or the California Certificate of Title and the nonresident registration card or a letter from the nonresident registration jurisdiction verifying that state did not issue a title.
    
    **Note:** A nontransferable (goldenrod) registration may be issued when there is an outstanding California Certificate of Title. An Application for Duplicate or Paperless Title (REG 227) form cannot be accepted unless the application contains evidence of prior California registration and that a nonresident title was not issued.
  
  - **Nontitle State:** The California Certificate of Title or a bill of sale to the person shown as owner on the nonresident registration with the nonresident registration card or a letter from the nonresident registration jurisdiction verifying the California Certificate of Title was collected by that state and a REG 227.

- A Verification of Vehicle (REG 31) form.
- For commercial vehicles:
  - If no changes/alterations have been made to the vehicle, a REG 256 by the owner certifying there have been no alterations/changes made to the vehicle in lieu of a weight certificate.
  - If changes/alterations have bee made to the vehicle, a California Weighmaster’s Certificate.
  - A REG 4008 giving the operating weight of the vehicle, unless the vehicle is a pickup with an unladen weight of 8,000 pounds or less.

- Fees. If the vehicle is:
  - **Registered Previously in the Same Registration Year:** Only the reregistration fee. The previously assigned registration expiration date is retained. However, the previous license plates are invalid and new license plates must be issued.
  
  - **Registered in a Prior Registration Year:** All appropriate fees.
  
  - **Registered to New Owner:** No transfer fee; however, all other fees are due.
12.140 Previous Registration in California, continued

- The previously-issued California license plates, **unless** the plates qualify for retention under the old plates reassigned to a collector vehicle or Year of Manufacture (YOM) programs. Refer to Year of Manufacture (YOM) License Plates section in Chapter 21 for reassignment of old plates on collector vehicles and YOM License Plates.
- The out-of-state license plates.
- A smog certification, if appropriate

12.145 Privileges of Nonresidents (CVC §6700)

- The owner of any vehicle, other than a commercial vehicle, of a type subject to registration which is registered in a foreign jurisdiction may operate the vehicle in California until the owner accepts gainful employment in this state or establishes residency in this state, whichever occurs first, **provided** the vehicle displays valid license plates and has a valid registration issued to the owner, and the owner was a resident of that state at the time of issuance.
- A nonresident owner of a vehicle may operate, or permit operation of, a vehicle in California **without** obtaining California registration if the vehicle is registered in the place of residence of the owner and displays valid license plates issued by that state. This exemption **does not** apply if the nonresident owner rents, leases, lends, or otherwise furnishes the vehicle to a California resident for regular use on California highways.
- Any vehicle owned by a nonresident and furnished to a California resident for their regular use within this state **must be** registered in California within 20 days after first operation of the vehicle in this state by the resident (CVC §4000.4).
- A nonresident registration that **does not** indicate an expiration date will be considered to expire one year from the date of first use of the vehicle in California. Fees are due immediately and must be paid within 20 days if the owner accepts gainful employment or establishes residency in California (CVC §4152.5).

12.150 Reciprocity

**Nonresident Home State Entitles Owner to a Grace Period**—The nonresident owner may renew the vehicle registration in the owner’s residence state. The nonresident owner also may operate the vehicle in California during the grace period provided by the residence state without the vehicle becoming subject to California registration.

If the vehicle becomes subject to registration during the grace period (for example, the owner accepts gainful employment or becomes a resident) or the owner decides to obtain California registration, fees **are due** from the statutory expiration date and **must be** paid within 20 days to avoid penalties (CVC §4152.5).
12.150  Reciprocity, continued

**IMPORTANT:** Respond to questions from nonresident applicants regarding California registration requirements as follows:

- Caution the nonresident regarding the requirements.
- Make sure the nonresident understands the difference between the *statutory expiration date* and the *grace period*.
- Use specific dates when explaining the requirements for registration and payment of fees.

**Nonresident Home State Does Not Have a Grace Period**—In this case, the vehicle is subject to registration immediately upon first operation after the statutory expiration date unless the owner has evidence of renewal in the owner’s residence state made either before the statutory expiration date or before first operation in California after the statutory expiration date.

The registration fees must be paid within 20 days of the expiration date of the nonresident registration to avoid penalties (CVC §4152.5).

12.155  Repossession of Nonresident Vehicles in California

When a currently-registered nonresident vehicle is repossessed in California, the following must be submitted in addition to the usual nonresident registration requirements shown in the Basic Registration Requirements section in this chapter.


**Note:** A lien release is not required when the lienholder is the same as the repossessor for a Florida title submitted with a Florida Repossession Certificate, a Georgia title submitted with a Georgia repossession certificate, or a Texas title submitted with a Texas repossession affidavit.

- Evidence of the lienholder’s right to repossess the vehicle. Evidence may be showing as the lienholder on the title or a certified copy of the Conditional Sales Contract or chattel mortgage.
- Fees from the date of purchase or date of first retail sale by a dealer, without regard to the status of the nonresident registration or date of repossession.

12.160  Return of Nonresident License Plates (CVC §4302)

Vehicle owners may retain their out-of-state license plates when:

- Expired.
- The vehicle has “dual registration” or interstate registration (for example, a commuter who resides in Nevada and California with a vehicle registered in both states).
- The owner **must** return them to the motor vehicle department of the state where they were issued.

If an application for California registration is submitted with out-of-state license plates, and the application is **incomplete**, return the license plates to the owner and inform them to keep the license plates until the application is finalized.

Unexpired nonresident license plates surrendered upon application for California registration may be returned to the motor vehicle registration authority in the applicant’s home state.
12.160 Return of Nonresident License Plates, continued

**Note:** Switzerland license plates do not have an assigned expiration date and must be picked up. The license plates belong to the Swiss government, not the vehicle or owner.

The following must be submitted:
- The documentation listed in the Basic Registration Requirements section in this chapter.
  - The vehicle owner must indicate the disposition of their out-of-state license plates on the REG 343 and that they will not be affixed to a vehicle at any time.
- A completed Application for Return of Nonresident Plates (REG 356) form.
- The out-of-state license plates.
- The fee to return the license plates.

12.165 Vehicle Verification Exceptions

A vehicle verification is not required for:
- A new trailer purchased in another state and eligible for registration under the Permanent Trailer Identification (PTI) program, provided:
  - The trailer has never been registered.
  - The trailer has not been modified, altered, or assembled from a kit.
  - A secured Manufacturer’s Certificate/Statement of Origin (MCO/MSO) is submitted for the complete trailer.
- A new commercial vehicle purchased in another state as a complete vehicle or as an incomplete vehicle to which a new body was added to make a complete vehicle, provided the vehicle:
  - Has never been registered or issued International Registration Plan (IRP) registration in California or was issued IRP registration within the last 60 days only.
  - Has not been modified, altered, or assembled from a kit.
  - Has an unladen weight of 6,001 pounds or more.
  - Meets California emission standards.
  - Meets California emission standards.

**Note:** A REG 31 is required for a vehicle that does not meet California emission standards.

- Is now complete and one of the following is submitted:
  - A secured Manufacturer Certificate of Origin/Manufacturer Statement of Origin ((MCO/MSO) for the complete vehicle.
  - A secured MCO/MSO for the cab/chassis and the body with a REG 256 completed by the owner which certifies the vehicle “was not constructed with any used components” and states the body type model (BTM) for the complete vehicle.
12.165 Vehicle Verification Exceptions, continued

**Note:** A bill of sale, invoice, or sales slip cannot be accepted in lieu of a secured MCO/MSO.

— A REG 256 completed by the owner which certifies that no alterations, adjustments, or modifications have been made to the vehicle’s emissions control system and the vehicle has a properly-affixed emission label which indicates the vehicle meets U.S. and California emission standards or the MCO/MSO specifically states the vehicle meets California emission standards.

**Note:** If the MCO/MSO does not provide a recognized BTM abbreviation, such as P120SV which is a step van, accept a REG 256 from the applicant to clarify the BTM. A REG 31 is not required.