

# Frequently Asked Questions - REAL ID

*The REAL ID Act, passed by the U.S. Congress in 2005, requires changes to state standards, procedures, and requirements for the issuance of driver's licenses and identification cards, if they are to be accepted as identity documents by the federal government. This page is updated frequently; please check back often for additional information as it becomes available.*

## What is REAL ID?

The REAL ID Act is a federal law passed by Congress after Sept. 11, 2001, that establishes specific minimum federal standards for state-issued driver's licenses and ID cards to be accepted for certain federal purposes, like entering a federal building or boarding a domestic commercial flight. Enforcement of the REAL ID Act begins on October 1, 2020.

## When will REAL IDs be available in Pennsylvania?

REAL IDs will be available to Pennsylvanians who want them in March 2019.

## When do I need to get a REAL ID, if I don't have a passport and want to use my PA driver's license or ID card to board a domestic flight?

Beginning October 1, 2020, Pennsylvanians will need a REAL ID-compliant license, identification card or [an acceptable alternative identification as approved by TSA](#) (such as a passport) to board domestic commercial flights or enter a federal facility without a secondary form of Department of Homeland Security (DHS) approved identification.

## Can I board a plane with the license I have now?

Yes. Current PennDOT-issued driver's licenses and identification cards will remain acceptable identification for boarding domestic commercial flights as long as an extension is in place. Pennsylvania's current extension lasts until August 1, 2019. The final REAL ID deadline - the date in which Pennsylvanians will need a REAL ID or another [acceptable alternative identification as approved by TSA](#) (such as a passport), is October 1, 2020.

For additional information on identification accepted by TSA, visit their website or call 866-289-9673.

## Why did PennDOT wait so long to begin the REAL ID process?

Until May 2017, Pennsylvania law prohibited PennDOT from complying with the federal REAL ID Act. Act 3 of 2017 repealed this prior legislation and allowed PennDOT to seek REAL ID compliance. PennDOT anticipates that REAL ID-compliant documents will be available at the customer's option by Spring 2019.

### **I just renewed my license and got the newly-designed version. Is this a REAL ID?**

No. Periodic design and security updates are standard business practice for PennDOT, and it was in the best interest of our customers to continue that important work despite prior legislation prohibiting REAL ID compliance.

### **Will the non-REAL ID driver's license or ID card be less secure?**

No. While processes and procedures required by DHS to issue a REAL ID card differ from standard-issued cards, the non-REAL ID cards will be produced using the same security features.

### **Do I have to get a REAL ID?**

No, REAL ID is optional for Pennsylvania residents. You will be able to get either a REAL ID driver's license or identification card, or a standard driver's license or identification card. If you have a valid U.S. Passport or U.S. Passport Card, military ID, or another federally approved identification, you may use this as your form of identification to pass a TSA checkpoint at airports nationwide and visit a secure federal building or military installations at any time.

### **Why would I want a REAL ID?**

A federally accepted identification (whether it's a Pennsylvania REAL ID driver's license or identification card, U.S. Passport/Passport Card, military ID, etc.) must be used as your identification to board a commercial flight or visit a secure federal building **on and after October 1, 2020**.

If you want to use your Pennsylvania driver's license or photo ID as identification for these purposes, you may want to consider getting a REAL ID when they're available. Our REAL ID online wizard may help you decide if and when to get a REAL ID. If you know you will not be boarding a commercial flight or visiting a secure federal facility or military base after October 1, 2020 or if you have a valid passport, you do **not** need a REAL ID.

### **Do I need a REAL ID to drive?**

You do **not** need a REAL ID driver's license or identification card to do any of the following:

- Drive
- Vote
- Apply for or receive federal benefits for which you are entitled (Veterans' Affairs, Social Security Administration, etc.)
- Enter a federal facility that does not require an ID (i.e. a post office)
- Access a hospital or receive life-saving services
- Participate in law enforcement proceedings or investigations (serve on a federal jury, testify in federal court, etc.)

### **Where will I be able to get a REAL ID?**

When REAL IDs are available in March 2019, you will have three options to obtain one:

- **Apply online** (pre-verified customers only)
- **Visit any PennDOT Driver License Center** to have your documents verified and imaged and receive your REAL ID within 7-10 business days
- **Visit a REAL ID Center** to have your documents verified and imaged and receive your REAL ID at the time of service

PennDOT is in the process of retrofitting six of its existing driver's license centers to allow for over-the-counter issuance of REAL ID (Williamsport, Wilkes-Barre, Rockview in Centre County, Erie, Altoona and South 70th Street in Philadelphia) and adding five new locations in the following regions: Pittsburgh, King of Prussia, Allentown, Harrisburg, and Lancaster.

### **How much will the REAL ID cost?**

You will pay a one-time fee of \$30, plus a renewal fee (current renewal fee is \$30.50 for a four-year non-commercial driver's license or a photo ID). The expiration date of the initial REAL ID product will include any time remaining on your current license or ID card, plus an additional four years, unless you are over 65 and have a two-year license.

This expiration date structure means that the customer won't "lose" time that they've already paid for. After the initial REAL ID product expires, the customer will pay no additional fee, beyond regular renewal fees, to renew a REAL ID product.

**I have a CDL and want to upgrade to a REAL ID, but my commercial endorsements make my renewal fee more expensive. Do I have to renew when I get a REAL ID, or can I get a duplicate instead?**

Yes, CDL customers may choose to opt into REAL ID and receive a duplicate product rather than renewing.

## **If my driver's license expires before REAL IDs are available, do I have to pay to renew my license and pay again to get a REAL ID?**

Yes. You must renew your driver's license when it expires; **do not drive with an expired license**. It will be optional and voluntary to change your current license to a REAL ID. However, if you choose to get a REAL ID when they are available, your REAL ID expiration date will reflect any remaining time on your current license, plus four years - you will not "lose" any time that you've already paid for.

## **Will my REAL ID license or ID card look different?**

The visible difference will be that a REAL ID-compliant product will be marked with a gold star. REAL ID products are produced using the same security features as standard-issued products.

After March 2019, standard-issue, non-REAL ID driver's licenses and ID cards will also look different. Per federal REAL ID regulations, non-REAL IDs must be clearly labeled with the words "Not for REAL ID Purposes."

## **What documents will I need to obtain a REAL ID?**

When you apply for a REAL ID (which will not be available until March 2019), U.S. citizens will need to present original versions or certified copies (if applicable) of the following documents, per federal regulations. These documents can be taken to any PennDOT Driver License Center for pre-verification:

- Proof of Identity
  - Examples: Original or certified copy of a birth certificate with a raised/embossed seal (not a sticker) or valid U.S. Passport
    - \*Please note that hospital or commemorative certificates are not acceptable*
- Proof of Social Security Number
  - Example: Social security card
    - \*Please note that the name on your social security card MUST match the name on your proof of identity document*
- Proof of all Legal Name Changes
  - Examples: Certified marriage certificate or court order issued by your county's family court
    - \*Please note: You must show a complete name change history that links your birth certificate name to your current name. If you have a valid U.S. Passport or U.S. Passport Card with your legal name, you may use that as your name change document.*
- Two Proofs of Current, Physical PA Address

- Examples: Current, unexpired PA license or ID, PA vehicle registration, auto insurance card, utility bill with the same name and address

For more information about documents required for REAL ID and for documentation requirements for non-U.S. citizens, visit our [REAL ID Document Check](#) page.

### How can I pre-verify for REAL ID?

You may bring the [required REAL ID documentation](#) to any PennDOT driver license center. PennDOT staff will image the documents to your record, and when REAL IDs are available in March 2019, you can opt into the REAL ID program online, and your REAL ID product will be sent through the mail within 15 business days, eliminating any need for you to return to a Driver License Center.

If you received your first Pennsylvania learner's permit, driver's license or photo ID after September 1 2003, you are eligible to apply for REAL ID pre-verification online. Visit our [Online Pre-Verification page](#) for more information on this process.

**I have a CDL and had to provide my birth certificate and proof of residency to PennDOT when I renewed. Does this mean I'm pre-verified for REAL ID?**

No, federal REAL ID regulations require that you present proof of identity, proof of social security number and proof of PA residency when applying for REAL ID. Even if you have provided this info to PennDOT for a CDL renewal, you will need to present it again to get a REAL ID.

**I don't have my birth certificate, what do I do?**

If you do not have your birth certificate in your possession, you need to contact your state or county Department of Health office in the state of your birth and request an original or certified copy. **Some states may take up to six months to process duplicate birth certificates, so it is advisable to begin this process right away.**

- [View information for the Department of Vital Records at the PA Department of Health](#)
- [View contact information for health departments in other states](#)

**What if my name, date of birth or gender designation is different from what is on my birth certificate or legal status document?**

If your current legal name, date of birth, or gender designation is different from the information on your birth certificate or legal status document, you must show legal proof of the change. Acceptable documents supporting a change include:

- Name change or date of birth change:

- Marriage certificate or divorce decree issued by the county in which you were married.
- Court order approving a change of legal name or date of birth
- Original or certified copy of an amended birth certificate showing a change of name
- Gender designation:
  - A certified, amended birth certificate with a raised seal
  - A completed [DL-32 form](#) (PDF)

Please note: If you are using a passport as your proof of identity and your passport reflects your current name, **YOU DO NOT NEED TO SHOW PROOF OF NAME CHANGE.**

### **I have been married more than once. Do I need to show documentation of each name change?**

If you have been married more than once, you need to show a marriage certificate that shows the transition between names. You do NOT need to show divorce paperwork UNLESS you returned to your maiden name.

If you have a passport in your current married name and you use it as your main identity document, you do NOT need to show documentation of name changes.

### **Will my child need a REAL ID to board a plane?**

TSA does not currently require children under 18 to provide identification when traveling with a companion within the United States. The companion will need [acceptable identification](#) .

### **Where can I learn more about REAL ID?**

To learn more about REAL ID, visit [the Department of Homeland Security's website](#).