

Background to the Register

In January 2003, the Register of Number Plate Suppliers (RNPS) scheme was introduced in England and Wales to control the supply of number plates. This scheme is part of a government strategy to reduce vehicle crime.

The scheme is designed to stop motorists using fake number plates to avoid fines and penalty points, and to make it more difficult for thieves who put false number plates on stolen vehicles to make the vehicle look legitimate. It is now more difficult for criminals to get number plates because they need to provide proof of their ID and proof that they are entitled to the number plate. The police continue to support this scheme.

The registration scheme regulates the supply of number plates in England and Wales. The Road Safety Act 2006 extended the scheme to include Scotland and Northern Ireland from 1 August 2008. Under the Vehicles (Crime) Act 2001, from 1 November 2008 it will be an offence to supply number plates that do not keep to the Road Vehicles (Display of Registration Marks) Regulation 2001 and the British Standard BS AU 145d.

The law

The regulations which give full details of the scheme, are given in the Vehicles Crime (Registration of Registration Plate Suppliers) Regulations 2008 (SI 2008/1715) that came into force on 1 August 2008.

Part 2 of the Vehicles (Crime) Act 2001 allows a registration scheme to regulate the supply of number plates in England and Wales in order to combat vehicle 'ringing' (using a fake number plate to disguise a stolen vehicle or one used for criminal purposes) and 'cloning' (avoiding fines and penalties by using the number plate of another, legitimate vehicle).

The Act gives us and the Driver and Vehicle Agency (DVA) (our agents in Northern Ireland), as well as the police and trading standards powers to enforce the registration scheme and it makes it an offence to supply number plates which do not keep to the Road Vehicles (Display of Registration Marks Regulations) 2001 or meet the British Standard. The offence of supplying such plates came into force on 1 November 2008.

The Act sets out the powers available to the police, trading standards and our number plate enforcement officers. Under more powers, you can enter the premises of a registered number plate supplier without a warrant, and at any reasonable time, to inspect records of number plates they have produced.

If a supplier refuses to let you in, you can apply to the magistrates' court for a warrant to enter the premises. You can use reasonable force to exercise the power you have under the warrant.

Penalties

If you prosecute a supplier, a magistrates' court can suspend the supplier's registration with us, fine them, or both.

There are a number of offences under the Vehicles (Crime) Act 2001. The offences and penalties are set out below.

Level 5 fine – up to £5000

- A person supplying number plates when they are not registered as a number plate supplier (an offence under section 17 of the Act)
- A person applying to register as a number plate supplier when a court order has banned them from applying or suspended their registration (an offence under section 19 of the Act)
- A person knowingly providing plates (or parts for them) to a supplier who is not registered (an offence under section 29 of the Act)

Level 4 fine – up to £2500

- A person supplying number plates that do not keep to the Road Vehicles (Display of Registration Marks) Regulations 2001 or meet the British Standard BS AU145d (an offence under section 28 of the Vehicles Crime Act)
- A person knowingly supplying plates (or parts for them) to a business involved in selling plates that do not keep to the Road Vehicles (Display of Registration Marks) Regulations 2001 or meet the British Standard BS AU145d (an offence under section 28 of the Act)

Level 3 fine – up to £1000

- A person making a false application to be registered as a number plate supplier (an offence under section 19 of the Act)
- A person failing to keep records as set out in the scheme regulations (an offence under section 24 of the Act)
- A person failing to get the information set out in the regulations from customers (an offence under section 25 of the Act)
- A person failing to report changes to the details on the register within 28 days of the change happening (an offence under section 27 of the Act)
- A person failing to tell us within 28 days, that they have stopped supplying number plates (an offence under section 27 of the Act)

Level 2 fine – up to £500

- A person trying to stop an authorised person from exercising his or her powers (an offence under section 26 of the Act)

The court must tell us, through the Court Notification for RNPS' form (V949), about any order it made to suspend a registration or ban a person from applying for registration. Courts do not need to tell us about fines, although it would help if they did.

Who does the scheme affect?

- manufacturers;
- distributors;
- assemblers;
- motor factors;
- motor dealers;
- retail outlets; and
- online traders.

A number plate supplier is someone who supplies finished number plates that include the registration number of a vehicle registered with us or the DVA.

Fleet Operators in England, Wales and Scotland (not applicable in Northern Ireland) that are members of our Fleet Relicensing Scheme can apply to join the register. This is to help companies with fleets of 50 vehicles or more that would have difficulty providing the proof they need to buy number plates. The head office of the company, together with its depots, would need to register.

Manufacturers must not provide material to make number plates to suppliers in the United Kingdom who are not listed on the register, unless they:

- only supply number plates for newly registered vehicles;
- only supply parts for number plates; or
- only manufacture and fit plates to their own vehicles.

Sales records

Under the scheme's regulations, businesses must keep records of the number plates they sell and let us, the DVA, the police and trading standards see those records, when asked, to detect crime.

Suppliers need to keep the following information.

- The registration number of the plate they have sold;
- The customer's name and address and entitlement to the number plate;
- A number which can be used to trace a customer and is taken from **(original documents.)**

The number should be:

- the customer's driver number, taken from the driving licence;
- a document reference number taken from section 1 of the V5C/V5C(NI); or
- in the case of plates fitted by a repairer an insurer has appointed, the insurer's reference and policy number; or
- the DVLA, DVA or VOSA stamp details from the Number Plate Authorisation Certificate (V948).

Documents suppliers can accept as ID and proof of entitlement

Suppliers must check original documents to confirm the customer's identity, address and entitlement to the registration number. They must check at least one document from each column in the table below.

Documents to confirm identity	Documents to confirm entitlement to the registration number
A driving licence, with or without a photo and whether or not it was issued in the United Kingdom	A Vehicle Registration Certificate V5C/V5C(NI)
An electricity, gas or water bill, a landline phone bill, a council tax bill, or a rates bill in Northern Ireland (issued within the last six months)	The new keeper supplement V5C/2/V5C/2(NI) of the Vehicle Registration Certificate V5C/V5CNI
A bank or building society statement issued within the last six months	A Certificate of Entitlement V750/V750(NI)
A current passport, whether or not it was issued in the United Kingdom	A Retention Document (V778) (does not apply in Northern Ireland)
A national identity card issued by the government of a state or a territory other than the United Kingdom	A Renewal Reminder for a tax disc or SORN V11/V11(NI)
A debit card or credit card issued by a bank or building society	A Temporary Registration Certificate V379/V379(NI)
A police warrant card	A Number-Plate Authorisation Certificate (V948) with an official DVLA, DVA or VOSA stamp
An armed forces identity card	A letter of authorisation from a lease or hire company, including fleet operators. The letter must quote the document reference number from the V5C/V5C(NI) in Northern Ireland
	A record of the insurer's name and their reference and policy number (for repairs approved by an insurance company)

Used vehicle dealers

Dealers who are registered as number plate suppliers, and who sell used vehicles and fit new number plates to vehicles in their own stock, have to keep a record of:

- the 11 digit document reference number shown in section 1 of the V5C/V5C(NI);
- the date the number plate was replaced; and
- the registration number of the vehicle. (This only applies to refitting plates, not selling replacement plates. In this case suppliers must check a customer's ID and their entitlement to buy the registration number.)

Number plates fitted after insurance claims

If plates are fitted to a vehicle that has been referred to a body repairer by an insurer, the V5C/V5C(NI) might not be available, so the supplier can record the insurer's reference number and policy number instead, together with details of the ID the customer provided.

General points

The person buying a number plate does not have to be the registered keeper. Someone can buy a number plate for another person.

If a supplier provides other suppliers with complete plates or parts of plates that they will sell on, they need to be sure that the business they are supplying is registered. They should keep a record of the supplier's registration number. The other supplier is responsible for checking the end customer's ID and proof of entitlement, and for keeping records of sales (for three years).

If suppliers do not keep proper records they are breaking the law under section 24 of the Vehicles Crime Act. They could be fined up to £1000.

Suppliers should make sure they dispose of unwanted plates correctly and securely, so they cannot be used illegally. Plates should be cut into at least four pieces with none of the pieces showing over half of the registration number.

'Non-compliant' number plates

It is already an offence for motorists to display non-compliant number plates (number plates that do not keep to the Road Vehicles (Display of Registration Marks Regulations 2001 or meet the British Standard) on their vehicles. From 1 November 2008 it will also become an offence to supply non-compliant number plates. This offence will apply throughout the UK and carries a maximum penalty of a £2500 fine or being suspended from the register for up to five years, or both. It will be illegal to supply plates with the vehicle registration number spaced so it looks like a name, does not use the standard font and colour, or which have a slogan or message printed on them.

Information about how registration numbers should be displayed is given in 'Vehicle Registration Numbers and Number Plates' (INF104).

Foreign number plates

The registration scheme does not apply to foreign number plates. However, suppliers should make sure that foreign plates are not for vehicles registered in the UK. To guard against fraud, suppliers should ask for a document showing what vehicle the plates are for. They should also keep a record of the reference number on the document.

Details on the internet

The names and addresses of registered number plate suppliers are held on the website at www.businesslink.gov.uk/transport

How suppliers register

A number plate supplier with just one place of business must fill in and return application form V940.

A number plate supplier with two or more places of business must fill in form V940 and supplementary form V940/1.

Suppliers can download application forms from our website at www.businesslink.gov.uk/transport or get them by phoning us on 0300 123 0797.

Suppliers can apply and pay the registration (£40 a business with an extra fee of £40 for each sales outlet) by credit card or debit card, by calling 0300 123 0797.

Suppliers must send the application form, together with their registration fee, to:

DVLA

The Register of Number Plate Suppliers

Swansea

SA99 1DB.

All successful applications will receive an Acknowledgement Letter (V942) as confirmation that the business is a registered number plate supplier.

Registration fee

Suppliers must pay a one-off fee of £40 for each place of business. This fee covers the costs of running and enforcing the scheme. Number plate suppliers must register their head office together with each sales outlet and provide a fee of £40 for each of the premises. The company's head office will be given the Supplier Identity Number (SID) for the purpose of the register, with each sales outlets being noted on the register under the head office SID. However, subsidiary companies should register separately to get their own SID number.

How long registration lasts

A supplier's registration will last as long as they provide number plates as part of a business. Their registration will end if they stop supplying number plates. If this is the case, we must be told within 28 days.

A magistrates' court can suspend a business as a number plate supplier for up to five years. When the suspension ends, we will put the supplier back on the register after writing to the business concerned to find out if they want to start supplying number plates again.

Change of registration details

Suppliers must tell us about changes to the details we hold on the register. They must do this by filling in the changes section on the (Acknowledgement Letter) (V942) we sent them.

Suppliers must send the letter to:

DVLA

The Register of Number Plate Suppliers

Swansea

SA99 1DB.

