



Traffic Services Section Michigan State Police Field Update #18

Providing Traffic Related Information and Services to Michigan Law Enforcement

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Historic Vehicle Registration Plates

[MCL 257.20a](#) defines "historic vehicle" as a vehicle that is over 25 years old and used "**solely as a collector's item** and for participation in club activities, exhibitions, tours, parades, and similar uses...but is **not used for general transportation.**" [MCL 257.803a](#) and [MCL 257.803p](#) provide for two types of historic vehicle registration plates. If a vehicle is over 25 years old, but is used for general transportation, then it does not qualify as a historic vehicle. Violations of 803a and 803p are 90 day/\$100 misdemeanors, and the plates are subject to cancellation by the Secretary of State (SOS).

Dealer Registration Plates

[MCL 257.244\(3\)](#) allows a dealer to use a dealer plate on a vehicle "otherwise required to be registered under this act" to operate or move the vehicle without registering the vehicle to the dealership. This exemption also includes "an employee, servant, or agent of the dealer." Subsection (5) states "A licensee **shall not use** a special plate described in this section **on service cars or wreckers** operated as an adjunct of a licensee's business." [Attorney General Opinion 6634](#) states that a dealer plate is permissible on a vehicle used to transport vehicles to auctions or other dealers, if such vehicles could have legally been driven with a dealer plate. Subsection (8) allows a lessee or purchaser to operate a vehicle with a dealer plate for up to 72 hours after the time of lease or purchase with appropriate paperwork.

While the language is relatively permissive in how these plates can be used, there are some restrictions. Family members of employees are generally not covered by the exemption. Vehicles owned by and titled to an employee are also not covered. When investigating possible dealer plate misuse by an employee of a dealership, check the VIN to determine the actual titled owner.

Special Mobile Equipment

[MCL 257.62](#) defines special mobile equipment as "every vehicle **not designed or used primarily** for the transportation of persons or property and **incidentally operated or moved over the highways**, including farm tractors, road construction or maintenance machinery, mobile office trailers, mobile tool shed trailers, mobile trailer units used for housing stationary construction equipment, ditch-digging apparatus, and well-boring and well-servicing apparatus. The foregoing enumeration shall be considered partial and shall not operate to exclude other vehicles which are within the general terms of this definition." [MCL 257.216](#) exempts special mobile equipment from the requirement to display a registration plate, but a special plate may be purchased through SOS.

For a trailer to qualify as a mobile tool shed, it must be towed to the worksite empty, disconnected from the towing vehicle, placed on supports, and left at the site for an extended period of time. A trailer used to haul plumbing, roofing, electrical, landscape, painting, or other similar supplies, and removed from the worksite frequently is not a mobile tool shed trailer.

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