



FAQs about International Driving Permits & International Driver Licenses

The Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles

The RMV has been receiving an increasing number of inquiries from police officers and court officials seeking information as to what an International Driving Permit or International Driver's License is, and what rights, if any, they grant to an operator who seeks to drive on Massachusetts roadways.

International Driving Permits and International Driver Licenses have come under more intense scrutiny recently with the proliferation of Internet sites advertising these documents as a way to avoid taking license tests or to subvert license revocations. Some Internet sites advertise documents for sale that are fraudulently marketed as an "International Driving Permit" or an "International License." The web sites selling these documents try to convince prospective buyers that the documents actually confer driving privileges. Some even ask the name of the country you would like the license issued from. These fraudulent documents are marketed with the intent to mislead the purchaser, and ultimately a police officer, as to the privileges the document confers. Some individuals have paid hundreds of dollars for such documents.

In the opinion of the Registry of Motor Vehicles, in instances where the operator is otherwise unlicensed or under suspension or revocation, or where his or her right to operate in the Commonwealth has been suspended or revoked, the possession of an International Driving Permit or International Driver's License has no legal effect.

Here are some typical Questions and Answers that may be helpful.

Q #1. What is an International Driving Permit?

A An **International Driving Permit** serves primarily as a translation of a person's foreign driver's license into ten (10) major languages. The Permit itself is a small (4" X 6"), gray covered, multi-page booklet with white pages, containing the driver's first and last name, the date and place of birth and the person's permanent address in the country of

issuance. A Permit also contains a photograph of the driver and his/her signature. Other than the page containing the personal information and photograph, each page conveys the same information but in a separate language.

Q #2. Who issues International Driving Permits?

A Permits are only issued in the driver's country of origin and only by a membership-type automobile association authorized to issue such Permits by an International Road Traffic Convention to which the United States is a party. A fee is charged for the issuance of the Permit. The American Automobile Association (AAA) issues International Driving Permits to licensed Massachusetts drivers who intend driving in other countries. An International Driving Permit is usually valid for a one (1) year period and is not valid in the country of issuance.

Q #3. Does an International Driving Permit confer driving privileges in Massachusetts?

A No. It does *not* confer any driving privileges. The Permit is *not* a substitute for the person's valid driver license. A driver who is licensed in another country *must* carry his/her valid foreign driver license when driving in Massachusetts.



FAQs about International Driving Permits & International Driver Licenses

The Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles

Q #4. Is a foreign licensed driver required to carry an International Driving Permit when driving in Massachusetts?

A No. It is suggested, however, that he/she do so if the foreign license is not printed in the English language.

Q #5. Does Massachusetts honor valid foreign driver licenses from any country?

A No. Massachusetts will only honor valid licenses from countries identified in Appendix "C" of the current Massachusetts Driver's Manual. Appendix "C" is re-printed here for your review. Most of the identified countries are parties to one of the two major international road or automotive traffic conventions the U.S. recognizes. Germany and Switzerland are not parties to the 1949 Road Traffic Convention but their driver licenses are honored based on reciprocal agreements. At present, validly licensed drivers from some of the former USSR republics are also recognized. **Note: Some countries that issue International Driving Permits include in the Permit a list of countries that the holder is authorized to drive in. Be aware that other Road Traffic Conventions that the U.S. is not a party to have a more expansive list of countries. You should be guided by the countries listed in Appendix "C."**

Q #6. What is an International Driver's License and how does it differ from an International Driving Permit?

A The Registrar does not recognize as valid any document purporting to be an *International Driver's License*, or any other document that confers driving privileges, **unless issued by the government agency that issues such licenses in the driver's country of residence and the driver is validly licensed in that country.** The governments of some countries issue an international version of their own domestic driver license to their validly licensed drivers who indicate a need for a driver's license that will be recognized in other

countries. The international version of the domestic driver license includes translations (including into English). The Federal Republic of Germany and Switzerland issue such a license. Since Germany and Switzerland are recognized in Appendix "C" of the Massachusetts Driver's Manual, we honor both the domestic and International version of their respective licenses as conferring driving privileges. Even if a country issues an international version of its own domestic license, the license will only be honored in Massachusetts if the country is identified in Appendix "C." Remember, a foreign driver cannot drive in Massachusetts unless his/her driver's license is issued by the government of a country identified in Appendix "C." A validly issued International Driving Permit, while not required, merely serves to confirm that a license was issued and translates the relevant information on the license. It is not a substitute for a valid license and the license must be carried when operating in Massachusetts.

A foreign visitor from one of the countries or territories listed here may legally drive on the roads of the Commonwealth on his or her own country's license (limited to a licensed driver who is at least 18 years old and limited to a vehicle of the type covered by the license) for up to one (1) year from the date of arrival. [The visitor may operate his or her own private passenger vehicle if displaying valid license plates from the visitor's country (and meeting insurance standards set by the Commonwealth if operated longer than 30 days) for up to one (1) year from the date of arrival. Except for vehicles being operated in Massachusetts from Mexico and Canada, vehicles being operated in Massachusetts that are registered in any of the countries listed in Appendix "C" (including Germany and Switzerland) must also exhibit the *International Distinguishing Sign* on the rear exterior of the vehicle. The sign is a white oval that is obtained from the country of registration and contains one to three black letters identifying the country].

You may access the contents of the Massachusetts Driver's Manual on the RMV web site at: www.state.ma.us/rmv.



FAQs about International Driving Permits & International Driver Licenses

The Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles

Appendix C

Massachusetts will honor valid Driver's Licenses and Registrations issued by the following countries*

Albania	Hungary	Seychelles
Algeria	Iceland	Sierra Leone
Argentina	India	Singapore
Austria	Ireland	Slovak Rep.
Australia	Israel	South Africa
The Bahamas	Italy	Spain (incl. African localities and provinces)
Bangladesh	Ivory Coast	Sri Lanka
Barbados	Jamaica	Suriname
Belgium	Japan	Swaziland
Belize	Jordan	Sweden
Benin	Korea	Syrian Arab Republic
Botswana	Kyrgyz Rep.	Taiwan (Rep. of China)
Brazil	Laos	Tanzania
Bulgaria	Lebanon	Thailand
Cambodia	Lesotho	Togo
Canada	Luxembourg	Trinidad & Tobago
Central African Republic	Madagascar	Tunisia
Chile	Malawi	Turkey
Colombia	Malaysia	Uganda
Congo	Mali	United Kingdom (Great Britain & Northern Ireland) & Cayman Islands, Gibraltar, Guernsey, Isle of Man & States of Jersey
Dem. Rep of Congo	Malta	Uruguay
Costa Rica	Mauritius	Vatican City
Cote d'Ivoire	Mexico	Venezuela
Cuba	Monaco	Vietnam Rep.
Cyprus	Morocco	Western Samoa
Czech Rep.	Namibia	Zambia
Denmark	Netherlands & Antilles and Aruba	Zimbabwe
Dominican Republic	New Zealand	Germany (by reciprocity)
Ecuador	Nicaragua	Switzerland (by reciprocity)
Egypt	Niger	Armenia (CIS)
El Salvador	Norway	Azerbaijan (CIS)
Fiji	Panama	Byelorussia (CIS)
Finland	Papua New Guinea	Kazakastan (CIS)
France (inc. Overseas Territories & Principality of Andorra)	Paraguay	Moldova (CIS)
The Gambia	Peru	Tajikistan (CIS)
Georgia (Republic of)	Phillippines	Turkmenistan (CIS)
Ghana	Poland	Ukraine (CIS)
Greece	Portugal (inc. Portuguese Territories)	Uzbekistan (CIS)
Grenada	Romania	Latvia
Guatemala	Russian Fed.	Lithuania
Guyana	Rwanda	Estonia
Haiti	St. Lucia	
Honduras	St. Vincent & Grenadines	
Hong Kong (not including China)	San Marino	
	Senegal	

* The Registrar reserves the right to amend this list at any time based on additional information received from the U.S. Department of State or other sources