

Nonresident Military Personnel Operating a Vehicle in California

Nonresident military personnel, **and** military or civilian members of NATO who are not citizens of the United States are permitted to operate a vehicle in this state with valid license plates from either:

- the individual's home state or country **or**
- the state or country where the individual was regularly assigned and stationed when the license plates were issued, if the following requirements are met:
 1. The license plates displayed on the vehicle are valid plates issued by a foreign jurisdiction.
 2. The vehicle registration and license plates are issued to the military person or spouse of the military person.
 3. The vehicle registration and license plates are issued by the foreign jurisdiction where the military person was last regularly assigned and stationed for duty by military orders or a jurisdiction claimed by the nonresident military person as the permanent state of residence.
 4. If the vehicle is a motor vehicle, the owner or driver has insurance.
- The nonresident military owner is shown as a lessee or registered owner of the vehicle.
- The vehicle is **not** operated "for hire."

This applies to all vehicles owned by the military person or spouse except any commercial vehicle used in any business manner wherein the military person or 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.

State Registration Requirements

When your vehicle registration expires, it must be renewed, either in the current state of registration or in California. The decision on where to register your vehicle may be based on a cost comparison. Below is a list of possible fees connected with registering a vehicle in California:

- Registration: \$43.00 base fee
- California Highway Patrol: \$24.00 base fee
- Misc. fees based on vehicle make/model/year and purchase price: Vehicle License Fee (VLF), Fingerprint ID Fee, Auto Theft and/or DUI Crime Deterrence Program, County Svc Authority for Freeway Emergencies Fee, Abandoned Vehicle Fee, Air Quality Management District, and Alt Fuel/Tech Reg Fee.

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To get a better idea of the actual cost, the CA DMV website offers a vehicle registration fee calculator. Visit <https://www.dmv.ca.gov/FeeCalculatorWeb/newResidentForm.do> and enter the information requested.

Vehicle License Fee (VLF) Exemption

Current Military personnel stationed in California are exempt from payment of the Vehicle License Fee (VLF) on any vehicle owned or leased and registered in California.

In order to obtain the VLF exemption, military personnel must complete a [Nonresident Military Exemption Statement](#) (REG 5045) form and NATO members are required to complete a [North Atlantic Treaty Organization \(NATO\) Status of Forces Agreement](#) (REG 5046) form. This exemption DOES NOT apply to the military member's family members unless the vehicle is jointly owned and registered with the military member. If the vehicle is solely in the family member's name the exemption cannot be taken until the military member is added as owner or co-owner.

NOTE: The duty station must be located in California in order to receive a VLF exemption.

Driver License

A nonresident military member over the age of 18 who has in their immediate possession a valid driver license need not obtain a California license. This law also applies to military dependents over the age of 18 unless they become a "resident". If you have questions pertaining residency, contact the Legal Assistance Office.

Smog Certificate

A smog inspection must be completed for any vehicle registered and/or sold in California.

If you have further questions pertaining to driving a vehicle in California you may visit the California DMV website at <https://www.dmv.ca.gov/portal/dmv> or the Presidio of Monterey Legal Assistance Office located in Building 358, Buffalo Soldier Trail. For general questions you may also call the Legal Assistance Office at (831) 242-5084/5083.