

**MICHIGAN VEHICLE CODE (EXCERPT)**  
**Act 300 of 1949**

**257.255 Valid registration plate required; printed or electronic copy; exceptions; violation of subsection (1) as civil infraction or misdemeanor; penalty; nonpayment of apportioned fee under international registration plan as misdemeanor; penalty; impoundment; towing and storage costs; care of load in vehicle; impounded vehicle subject to lien; hearing; certification of unpaid judgment; foreclosure sale; pandemic expiration extension.**

Sec. 255.

(1) Except as otherwise provided in this chapter, a person shall not operate, nor shall an owner knowingly permit to be operated, upon any highway, a vehicle required to be registered under this act unless, except as otherwise provided in this subsection, no later than 30 days after the vehicle is registered or the vehicle's registration is renewed, a valid registration plate issued for the vehicle by the department for the current registration year is attached to and displayed on the vehicle as required by this chapter. For purposes of this subsection, a printed or electronic copy of a valid registration or verification of a valid registration through the L.E.I.N. is proof that the vehicle is registered or that the vehicle's registration has been renewed. A registration plate is not required for a wrecked or disabled vehicle, or vehicle destined for repair or junking, that is being transported or drawn on a highway by a wrecker or a registered motor vehicle. The 30-day period described in this subsection does not apply to the first registration of a vehicle after a transfer of ownership or to a transfer registration under section 809.

(2) Except as otherwise provided in this section, a person who violates subsection (1) is responsible for a civil infraction. However, if the vehicle is a commercial vehicle that is required to be registered according to the schedule of elected gross vehicle weights under section 801(1)(k), the person is guilty of a misdemeanor punishable by imprisonment for not more than 90 days or a fine of not more than \$500.00, or both.

(3) A person who operates a vehicle licensed under the international registration plan and does not have a valid registration due to nonpayment of the apportioned fee is guilty of a misdemeanor, punishable by imprisonment for not more than 90 days, or by a fine of not more than \$100.00, or both. In addition, a police officer may impound the vehicle until a valid registration is obtained. If the vehicle is impounded, the towing and storage costs of the vehicle, and the care or preservation of the load in the vehicle are the owner's responsibility. Vehicles impounded are subject to a lien in the amount of the apportioned fee and any fine and costs incurred under this subsection, subject to a valid lien of prior record. If the apportioned fee, fine, and costs are not paid within 90 days after impoundment, then following a hearing before the judge or magistrate who imposed the fine and costs, the judge or magistrate shall certify the unpaid judgment to the prosecuting attorney of the county in which the violation occurred. The prosecuting attorney shall enforce the lien by foreclosure sale in accordance with the procedure authorized by law for chattel mortgage foreclosures.

(4) A noncommercial vehicle registration described in subsection (1) that expires on or after March 1, 2020 but is renewed on or before March 31, 2021 is not in violation of this section. A noncommercial vehicle registration described in subsection (1) that expires after March 31, 2021 but before August 1, 2021, but is renewed within 120 days after the date of the expiration is not in violation of this section. A commercial vehicle registration described in subsection (1) that expires on or after March 1, 2020 but is renewed on or before March 31, 2021 is not in violation of this section. A commercial vehicle registration described in subsection (1) that expires after March 31, 2021 but before August 1, 2021, but is renewed within 120 days after the date of the expiration is not in violation of this section.

**History:** 1949, Act 300, Eff. Sept. 23, 1949 ;-- Am. 1961, Act 26, Imd. Eff. May 11, 1961 ;-- Am. 1962, Act 58, Eff. Mar. 28, 1963 ;-- Am. 1963, Act 88, Eff. Sept. 6, 1963 ;-- Am. 1984, Act 330, Imd. Eff. Dec. 26, 1984 ;-- Am. 1987, Act 34, Eff. Aug. 26, 1987 ;-- Am. 2003, Act 9, Eff. Sept. 1, 2003 ;-- Am. 2018, Act 64, Eff. June 12, 2018 ;-- Am. 2020, Act 127, Imd. Eff. July 1, 2020 ;-- Am. 2020, Act 241, Eff. Oct. 28, 2020 ;-- Am. 2020, Act 304, Imd. Eff. Dec. 29, 2020 ;-- Am. 2021, Act 71, Imd. Eff. July 29, 2021

**Compiler's Notes:** Enacting section 1 of Act 71 of 2021 provides: "Enacting section 1. Sections 216(2), 217(11) and (12), 226(11) and (13), 255(4), 301(6), 306(1), (2), (4), and (6), 306a(4), 309(11), 312k(1), 314(7), 801k(1) and (2), and 811(5) of the Michigan vehicle code, 1949 PA 300, MCL 257.216, 257.217, 257.226, 257.255, 257.301, 257.306, 257.306a, 257.309, 257.312k, 257.314, 257.801k, and 257.811, as amended by this amendatory act, are intended to be retroactive and apply retroactively."