

License Plate Obstruction Could Result in Fine as of 1/1/2009

As of January 1, 2009 Arizona requires that an Arizona license plate on a vehicle must be clearly visible, and that the word "Arizona" at the top of the plate may not be covered.

The wording of [A.R.S. 28-2354](#) that is applicable here is:

"A person shall display all license plates as required by subsection A until their lawful use expires or is canceled or revoked. A person shall maintain each license plate so it is clearly legible and so that the name of this state at the top of the license plate is not obscured."

Violators can be hit with an average fine of \$135, plus court fees, depending on the city where the violation is discovered.

Law-enforcement thinks it will help officers tell the difference between in-state and out-of-state vehicles. "If a witness can tell us that a vehicle has an Arizona plate because they can clearly see it, that helps us immensely," said Harold Sanders, a spokesman for the state Department of Public Safety.

Arizona issues license plates in more than 60 styles, from plates that honor veterans to one that promotes wildlife conservation. With so many types of plate available it has become difficult for officers to identify in what state the vehicle is registered.

The plate-frame law passed the Legislature in 2006, but implementation was delayed until 2009.

Critics say it will likely cause confusion among Arizona residents, who are largely unaware of the new rules. "It's going to cause a lot of headaches for consumers," said Bobbi Sparrow, president of the Arizona Automobile Dealers Association. "Consumers who have had their old frames for years and years are now going to be illegal." Drivers with out-of-state plates are exempt from the law.

Motor vehicle department officials are urging Arizona drivers to check their plates. "Most people only go look at their license plate when they put their new sticker on when they renew their registration," said Cydney DeModica, a MVD spokeswoman. "The real bottom line here is that everyone should walk around and look at their license-plate holders on the back of their cars."

What many people do not realize is that this law also pertains to any type of spray or reflective cover that can be placed over a license plate. These products are sold to consumers under the guise of preventing identification by photo detection cameras. Because they cause the license plate not to be fully clearly legible, they are also illegal in the state of Arizona.