

A. Foreign Licensed Drivers

Note: Appendix A of the hardcopy February 2018 version of the Massachusetts Driver's Manual is no longer applicable and will be revised when it is next printed. The below information has been updated based on 2018 changes to state law.

Effective July 2018, Massachusetts General Law (Chapter 90, Section 10) was changed to allow validly licensed drivers from **any** country to operate validly registered motor vehicles in Massachusetts.

All foreign-licensed drivers are subject to the following requirements when operating a motor vehicle in Massachusetts. Violation of these requirements is a criminal offense.

1. A foreign-licensed driver must have a valid driver's license when operating a motor vehicle in Massachusetts. It cannot be suspended or revoked.
2. If the foreign driver's license is not written in English or does not contain an English translation, the license holder must obtain and carry either a valid International Driving Permit **or** an acceptable alternative translation document.

- **International Driving Permit (IDP):** An IDP is a translation of a driver's license into 10 major languages. It does not convey any driving privileges but must accompany any foreign license that is not in English. A foreign-license holder should contact the agency that issued the foreign driver's license before coming to the United States. IDP's cannot be issued in the United States to foreign-licensed drivers.

For information on obtaining an IDP, visit <https://internationaldrivingpermit.org/>

- **Alternative Translation Document:** If an IDP cannot be obtained in the country that issued the driver's license, the license holder must obtain an alternative translation document that properly identifies the license holder and translates the relevant license information into English. An alternative translation document must contain a passport-size photo of the license holder and a translation into English of the license, including the following:
 - Country where the license is issued
 - Full name of licensee
 - Date of birth
 - Permanent place of residence
 - Gender
 - Type of vehicle for which the license is valid
 - Driver's license number
 - Name and address of the driver licensing agency (including the website address if available)

The RMV form "*Translation into English of a Foreign Driver License*" can be used as an acceptable translation document and can be found on the RMV website at: <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/driving-in-massachusetts-on-a-foreign-drivers-license>. It must be completed by one of the following:

- A bilingual teacher at an accredited Massachusetts college, university, or private language school
- A bilingual Notary Public whose commission has been issued by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts
- The local Consulate for the licensee's country of origin in the United States
- The American Translator's Association (the national association of professional translators and interpreters)

Alternative translation documents are also acceptable if they are issued by the government agency that issued the license or by that country's embassy/consulate.

3. The country of issuance must have and enforce standards for operation of motor vehicles equivalent to those in Massachusetts (as determined by the Registrar).
4. The foreign license must be issued by the driver licensing authority in the country in which the driver is a resident. (A provisional or learner's license does not qualify as a "driver's license".)
5. A foreign-licensed driver must be at least 16 years of age to operate a motor vehicle in Massachusetts.
6. A non-resident who holds a valid driver license from the country in which he/she resides may operate any motor vehicle in Massachusetts of the same type which he/she is licensed to operate. The vehicle must be properly registered in this state or in any other state or country. If registered in a foreign country, the vehicle may be required to display the *International Distinguishing Sign* outside, on the rear of the vehicle. The driver must have the vehicle's current registration document in his/her possession or in the vehicle.
7. A foreign-licensed driver who is visiting Massachusetts cannot convert the foreign license to a Massachusetts driver's license while still a visitor to this state. Only a "resident" of this state (with acceptable required documentation, including documents to prove "lawful presence" in the United States) can obtain a Massachusetts license or ID Card. A short-term visitor cannot qualify as a "resident."
8. A member of the United States Armed Forces returning from active duty outside of the United States who possesses a driver's license issued by the United States Armed Forces in a foreign country may operate motor vehicles for up to 45 days from the date of return to the United States.
9. Massachusetts accepts the driving permit, license, or military permit issued by a NATO country to its own military personnel or to the personnel of a civilian component of the military force. These NATO personnel are required to carry and present to law enforcement both of the following on demand:
 - An identity card issued by the NATO country showing name, date of birth, rank and number (if any), service, and photograph
 - An individual or collective movement order, in the language of the country and in the English and French languages, issued by an agency of the country or NATO and certifying to the status of the individual or group as a member or members of a force and to the movement ordered.

2017 List of all 29 NATO Member Countries: Albania, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Montenegro, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Avoid International License Scams

The Registrar and law enforcement agencies are aware that individuals or organizations use the Internet to sell documents as “International Driver Licenses” and “International Driving Permits” that imply driving privileges. The Registrar does not recognize a document labeled as an “International Driver License,” “International Driving Permit,” or any other document that allegedly confers driving privileges unless it was issued by the driver license issuance agency in the licensed driver’s country of residence.