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(OIPS)**

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**NEW MEXICO DRIVER'S LICENSE  
AND STATE ID**

**\*\* UPDATE: MVD is requiring all foreign nationals who do NOT have a US Social Security Number to schedule an appointment for a NM Driver's License or State Identification Card. You can schedule an appointment at: <https://secure.mvd.newmexico.gov/mvdappointments/> or call (505) 827-2257. If you have an SSN, you do not need to schedule an appointment.\*\*\***

## **I. EXPLANATION**

We highly recommend that you obtain a New Mexico Driver's License or State ID. The license or ID is a valid form of identification that is useful for many purposes. You will be asked to show a photo ID card each time you want to cash or write a check, charge a purchase to your credit card, order a drink or enter a night club.

If you plan to drive, you need to carry a driver's license with you each time you drive a vehicle. If you have a valid driver's license from your home country, including an international driver's license, you may drive with that license until you become a resident of New Mexico. You are considered a state resident once you have lived in New Mexico for more than 6 months. It is likely that if you are stopped or questioned by a police officer, he or she may not recognize the driver's license from your home country. Therefore, if you plan to live in New Mexico for more than six months and drive a car, we highly recommend getting the NM driver's license. The fee for the driver's license is \$18.00 (valid for four years) and \$34.00 (valid for eight years).

If you have a driver's license from another state in the U.S., a records check will be performed regarding any previous record for Driving While Under the Influence (DWI). You will need to pay an additional one-time fee of \$15.00 for the DWI records check. Therefore, your total fee will be \$33.00 for a four-year license or \$49.00 for an eight year license.

If you do not apply for a driver's license you should obtain a state ID card, which looks just like a driver's license and is also issued by the Motor Vehicle Division (MVD), but is for identification purposes only. To obtain the ID go to an MVD office with your passport, visa, I-94, I-20/DS-2019 and proof of residence (2). The fee for the State ID card is \$10.00 (valid for four years) and \$18.00 (valid for eight years). You may even consider getting one for your children.

## **II. CONDITIONS AND LIMITATIONS**

1. You will need to bring your passport, visa, I-94, your I-20/DS-2019, and two documents as proof of residence showing a New Mexico address (such as a rental agreement, bank statement with your street

address or utility bill). You may also want to take a translated and notarized version of your home country license, if you have one. Please note that if you present your driver's license from your home country, New Mexico law requires you to surrender it during the application process for a New Mexico driver's license. Note that MVD personnel are not well informed about requirements for non-immigrants who want to obtain their license. It may help you to bring this handout with you and to ask for a supervisor if you have difficulty with the MVD staff person.

2. US Social Security Number. MVD personnel will ask you for a social security card. You are not required to have a social security card to be issued a driver's license or state identification card. You are required to make a specific appointment to process your application without an SSN. Bring the SSN card if you already have one, otherwise, the items listed in section two will suffice.
3. Appointments. MVD's website specifies that "if you are a foreign national applying for a first time license at a State field office, you must make an appointment. No exceptions. Individuals coming into the office without an appointment will be referred to the website or told to call the MVD appointment line."

OIPS has clarified that MVD will ONLY require an appointment for those applicants that do NOT have a valid US Social Security Number. You can schedule an appointment on-line or call. If you have a US Social Security Number (and the SSN card to provide as documentation), then you may go into a State MVD office without an appointment. See, <https://secure.mvd.newmexico.gov/mvdappointments/> or (505) 827-2257.

### **III. OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION**

#### **Previous Licenses**

In most cases you will need to pass a written test, an eye exam, and a road test to obtain the driver's license. However, if you already have a license from your home country, you may not have to take the road test. If your home license is not in English, you will need to have it translated and notarized, before you can be exempt from the road test. If you have a license from another US state, you can pay the fee and exchange it for a New Mexico license. Please note that if you present your driver's license from your home country, New Mexico law requires you to surrender it during the application process for a New Mexico driver's license.

#### **Automobile Insurance**

In New Mexico, as in most US states, it is mandatory that all automobile operators carry proof of Liability Insurance for the automobile they are driving. You must supply proof of automobile insurance upon demand by any qualified state official. Insurance may be purchased from a number of reputable companies, all of whom are listed in the Yellow Pages of the phone book.

#### **Registration**

All automobiles must be registered with the State of New Mexico if you are living here. This is done at the Motor Vehicle Division (MVD). In order to register your car you must show proof of emissions testing. Your vehicle must pass the test once every two years. Any oil change, car dealer or mechanic that is licensed by the state can conduct the test. Fees assessed for the registration vary according to the year and type of car.

## IV. APPLICATION PROCESS

**STEP 1: Determine if you need to make an appointment to process your application or if you will be seen without an appointment.** If you do not have a US Social Security Number, you will need to make an appointment to apply for a New Mexico Driver's License or State Identification Card. Go to: <https://secure.mvd.newmexico.gov/mvdappointments/>. If you already have a US Social Security Number, you can go directly to a State MVD office to apply.

**STEP 2: DWI (Driving While Under the Influence of Alcohol) Prevention and Education Program**  
If you are under 25 years of age, you have to complete the DWI program before you may apply for the NM driver's license. The fee is \$20.00. It is a self-taught class, administered by UNM Continuing Education, with the workbook sent to you and a video available at your local library. Once you receive a workbook and answer all the questions correctly, the results in the form of the certificate are sent to you. The certificate must be presented to the MVD at the time you apply for your license. Call 277-0051 or go online at <http://dce.unm.edu/dwi-education.htm> for any additional information.

### STEP 3: Written Test

Acquire the New Mexico Driver's Manual from any of the MVD offices or on-line (in English and Spanish) at [http://www.dmv.org/nm-new-mexico/driver-handbook.php#Driver\\_License\\_Manual](http://www.dmv.org/nm-new-mexico/driver-handbook.php#Driver_License_Manual). This booklet covers all the driving regulations you need to know in order to pass the written test so study it carefully. You will need to pass this test before taking the road test. The written test is usually available half an hour before your scheduled road test. However, if you do not pass, you will need to reschedule. Bring your passport, visa, I-94 card, I-20/DS-2019, 2 proofs of residence (such as a rental agreement, bank statement with your street address or utility bill) and DWI certificate if between 18 and 25 years of age.

### STEP 4: Road test

You need to make an appointment to take the road test and bring a vehicle (someone else must drive you to the test if you do not have a license). An examiner will accompany you, for a brief on-the-road test of your driving skills. The car you are driving for the road test must have current registration and insurance and be in very good condition. You must also pass a vision test when you go in to take the road test.

## V. DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLE DIVISION OFFICES

Please, contact the office you plan to go to for open hours, directions, and services provided at that location.

Rio Bravo Office  
873-0683

Menaul & Juan Tabo  
292-4570

The Cottonwood Mall  
890-5799

Montgomery & San Mateo  
875-0715

**Although qualifying international applicants may apply at any "regular" MVD office, we recommend applying at the Montgomery & San Mateo office for consistency.** (Note that the "MVD Express" offices in Albuquerque are privately owned and provide some of the same services for an additional fee. However, in most cases internationals are NOT permitted to use MVD Express offices).

**MAIN TELEPHONE NUMBER FOR INFORMATION: 1-888-683-4636 (1-888-MVD-INFO)**

**Visit MVD online at <http://www.mvd.newmexico.gov/index.html>**

## **VI. PURCHASING A CAR**

Owning a car in the US can be expensive. Keep in mind ownership costs (purchase price, taxes, depreciation, finance charges, registration, insurance, license fees, parking, etc.) and the operating costs (gas, oil, engine maintenance, tires, etc.). If you'd like to research this option, *Consumer Reports* and *Car Magazine* are good resources. You may also refer to <http://www.carseverything.com> or <http://www.nada.com> . Automobile insurance rates for people who are new to the US are usually inflated until a driving history has been established. Be aware that parking on campus is very difficult and costly to obtain.

If you do decide to buy a car and drive to campus, parking permits can be obtained online if available at: <http://pats.unm.edu/> . The permits are based on availability and can be purchased as early as July 14th for the fall semester. Permits range from between \$70 to \$183 annually for students. Most parking spaces are in lots on the far northern or far southern side of campus. Shuttle buses run regularly to transport students from the parking lots to the center of campus.

## **VII. Evidence of New Mexico Residency**

Effective July 31st, 2009, the NM MVD updated which forms of identification and residency may be presented to show eligibility for a NM Driver's License or State ID card. The following chart clarifies which documents can be presented when applying for the Driver's License or State ID card.