

TITLE 9: VEHICLE CODE
DIVISION 2: REGISTRATION AND LICENSES

§ 2101. Registration: Application.

(a) Every owner of a motor vehicle or bicycle shall, before operating any such motor vehicle or bicycle on any highway of the Commonwealth, register it with the bureau. The application for registration shall be made on the prescribed form, signed by the owner and contain the applicant's residence address as well as a brief description of the vehicle or bicycle to be registered, including the name of the manufacturer, the engine and serial number when applicable, and whether the vehicle or bicycle is new or used.

(b) The owner of any foreign motor vehicle shall exhibit such evidence that will satisfy the bureau that the applicant is the lawful owner of the vehicle; provided, that no foreign vehicle with right hand drive, except a heavy equipment or construction vehicle, shall be imported into the Commonwealth, or registered, unless the vehicle has been previously registered in the Commonwealth or the United States, its territories or possessions.

(c) Notwithstanding any other law to the contrary, any owner of a motor vehicle with right hand drive which legally entered the Commonwealth prior to December 30, 1991, and any owner of a right hand drive heavy equipment, 50 tons or higher primarily used for agricultural purposes, or construction vehicle shall be permitted to register the vehicle upon approval of the Department of Environmental Quality regarding vehicular emission control standards as found in the Commonwealth's air pollution control regulations promulgated pursuant to [2 CMC §§ 3101](#) *et seq.*, the Commonwealth Environmental Protection Act, and presentation of satisfactory evidence of ownership to the bureau. The Director of Public Safety is authorized to promulgate regulations to define the types of vehicles to be included in the definition of heavy equipment or construction vehicles.

(d) No motor vehicle shall be registered or re-registered under this chapter unless the application for registration or renewal of registration contains satisfactory evidence of minimum motor vehicle liability insurance for the vehicle, as required under the provisions of [9 CMC §§ 8101](#) *et seq.*, and the bureau shall maintain a copy of such satisfactory evidence in connection with each motor vehicle so registered.

(e) Notwithstanding subsection (b) any right-hand drive vehicle, other than a vehicle described in subsection (c) in the Commonwealth as of February 1, 2017, may be registered after the following conditions are met:

- (1) The vehicle is converted from right-hand driver to left-hand driver;
- (2) The vehicle is inspected by the Director of the Bureau of Motor Vehicles and the Director determines that the converted vehicle is safe to drive; and
- (3) The conversion pursuant to subsection (e)(1) and the inspection pursuant to subsection (e)(2) shall be accomplished within 90 days after [Public Law 20-21](#) became law.

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Source: [PL 5-39](#), § 3 (repealing [PL 3-61](#), § 1 (§ 201), as amended by [PL 5-9](#), § 313); amended by [PL 7-14](#), § 4; [PL 7-49](#), §§ 1, 2; subsection (d) added by [PL 11-55](#), § 4; (c) amended and (e) enacted by [PL 20-21](#) §§ 2, 3 (Oct. 6, 2017), modified.

Commission Comment: With respect to the references to the “Director of Public Safety” and the “Department of Environmental Quality,” see [Executive Order 94-3](#) (effective Aug. 23, 1994), reorganizing the executive branch, changing agency names and official titles, and effecting other changes, set forth in the Commission comment to [1 CMC § 2001](#).

[PL 11-55](#), § 4 which added new subsection (d) to this section took effect on January 29, 1999. [PL 11-55](#) contained findings and purpose as follows:

Section 2. Findings and Purpose. It is the intent of this Act to recognize the existing privilege to own or operate a motor vehicle on the public streets and highways of the Commonwealth when such vehicles are used with due consideration for others and their property, and, to promote safety and provide financial responsibility requirements for such owners and operators whose responsibility it is to recompense others for injury to person or property caused by the operation of a motor vehicle. Accordingly, the Legislature finds that no person should have the privilege to own or operate a motor vehicle on the public streets and highways of the Commonwealth unless they have the minimum level of liability insurance required by this Act, and this Act therefore requires such minimum liability insurance as a condition of owning or operating a motor vehicle in the Commonwealth.

The Legislature finds that there is substantial problem in the Commonwealth with damages caused to persons and property by uninsured motorists. The unfortunate and unjust result of this problem is that innocent victims of motor vehicle accidents are often burdened with damages that are never paid by the uninsured motorist that caused such injuries. It is therefore the intent of this Act to ensure, in the most effective way practical, that any time a person operates or owns a vehicle, as a condition thereof, they must first have liability insurance in relation thereto. The Legislature finds that a person who suffers damages as a result of a motor vehicle accident caused by another should not have to bear such financial burden, rather, the party most at fault should bear such burden. By these means, this Act establishes the following hierarchy of liability for the payment of such damages: First, any person who negligently, recklessly, or intentionally causes a motor vehicle accident in which another person or their property is injured, such perpetrator should pay for those damages, and must by law and as a condition of owning or operating a motor vehicle, have the financial responsibility by way of liability insurance to be capable of paying such damages up to the minimum limits set forth in this Act. Second, if a person does cause such damages but, in violation of law, did not have the minimum liability insurance required by law, and is otherwise unable to pay for such damages, then the damages shall be paid, if the uninsured perpetrator

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who caused such accident was unlawfully denied liability insurance by an insurance provider, then that insurance provider shall be liable for such damages up to the amount that would have been covered by the minimum liability insurance required by this Act.

By these means, both insurance providers and the government will be encouraged to abide by the requirements of this Act to avoid such liability. Accordingly, this Act is intended to reduce the likelihood of a person being injured in a motor vehicle accident caused by another, and then left uncompensated for their injuries and damages. The actual perpetrator of such damages shall have the primary financial responsibility to pay for those damages via mandatory, minimum liability insurance. However, in the event that the perpetrator is unable to pay them, and, if the perpetrator's lack of insurance is somehow attributable to either an insurance provider or the government's failure to abide by those provisions in this Act which are designed to ensure that every motorist has liability insurance, then either of these parties may be liable for such damages under certain circumstances.

In codifying [PL 20-21](#) §§ 2, 3[2101], the Commission omitted drafting marks in (c) pursuant to [1 CMC § 3806\(g\)](#). The Commission numbered PL 20-21 § 2 as (e) pursuant to [1 CMC § 3806\(a\)](#). The Commission inserted a comma after "2017" in (e); changed "9 CMC § 2101(b)" to "subsection (b)" and "9 CMC § 2101(c)" to "subsection (c)" in (e); changed "Vehicle" to "Vehicles" in (e)(2); and changed "subsection (a)" to "subsection (e)(1)", "subsection (b)" to "subsection (e)(2)", and deleted "of this section" after "subsection (e)(2)" in (e)(3) pursuant to [1 CMC § 3806\(g\)](#). The Commission changed "after this Act becomes" to "after [Public Law 20-21](#) became" in (e)(3) pursuant to [1 CMC § 3806\(d\)](#).