

Vehicle licensing & insurance bulletin

New licence plate number configurations

ICBC will be gradually introducing new licence plate character configurations on some British Columbia licence plates. This will begin with the B.C. Parks - Porteau Cove series within the next few weeks, followed by regular passenger licence plates as early as August 2025.

What action do I need to take?

This bulletin is for awareness only. Within several weeks you may begin to see these legitimate new licence plate patterns on vehicles in traffic.

What are key facts for law enforcement?

No readability or misreading issues are expected because optical character recognition scanners do not rely on a fixed character sequence. All regular BC plates will remain six characters with the same design, reflectivity, and materials, making them scannable as usual.

The new licence plate patterns may include the letters 'U', 'Y' and 'Z', which were not previously used. The letters 'I', 'O' and 'Q' remain excluded from use because they present identification issues.

No updates are expected to be required to Automated Licence Plate Readers (ALPR) or backend systems (e.g., CPIC).

Will licence plates still have six characters maximum?

Yes. By altering the pattern of number and letter positions for each licence plate type, ICBC was able to increase available licence plate combinations using the same number of characters.

Why change formats?

The changes are necessary to ensure every licence plate has a unique alpha-numeric number, because the existing patterns are nearly used up.



Background

All BC licence plate types consist of no more than six characters. They follow unique patterns for the type of licence plate, type of vehicle and type of vehicle licence (e.g. farm truck.)

ICBC maintains approximately 40 licence plate types. New licence plate configurations will roll out as old inventories get exhausted from licence plates being issued with new vehicle licenses and from routine licence plate replacements.

To ensure there is sufficient inventory of unique licence plate numbers for the next twenty years, character pattern updates are planned for 16 licence plate types. Ten of these are scheduled for rollout as required over the next year.

Examples of new licence plate patterns

In the patterns below, # represents a number (0–9) and @ represents any letter (other than I, O, or Q.)

Licence plate type	Current pattern	New pattern	Example of new pattern
Passenger	@ @### @	@### @ @	A123BC
Parks – Porteau	RS### @	S### @ @	S123AA
Parks – Kermode	RK### @	P### @ @	P123AA
Parks – Purcell	RM### @	R### @ @	R123AA
Commercial Truck	@#####	# @ @###	1AB234
Farm Truck	G#####	#####A	12345A
Utility Trailer	U#####A	#U @ @ @ #	1UABC2
Prorate	#####P	#####P#	1234P5
Industrial	X#####	#X#####	1X2345

Reference

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Motor Vehicle Act 	s. 3(7)	Registration, licence and insurance
	s. 12	Number plates
	s. 13	Offences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Motor Vehicle Act Regulations 	Div. 3	Display and use of number plates
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vehicle licensing and insurance bulletins 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> License Plate Standard, ed. 3 (AAMVA) 		

For questions about this bulletin, contact: Rob Miller, Senior Vehicle Registration & Licensing Analyst
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For validation of specific plates, continue using the secure police line.



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Canadian Border Services Agency

Law Enforcement

BC Association of Chiefs of Police
(Municipal Police forces, PRIME-BC,
BC Highway Patrol, RCMP)

Other Jurisdictions

Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators (CCMTA)

American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators (AAMVA)

Registrar of Imported Vehicles

RIV Policy, Standards & Enforcement
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Transport Canada

Motor Vehicle Regulation Enforcement
(Director)

Road Safety and Motor Vehicle Regulation
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Union of B.C. Municipalities

U.S. Customs & Border Protection

Vehicle Sales Authority of B.C.

ICBC

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