

186.020 Registration requirement -- Application for registration -- Application and other documents to be sent to Transportation Cabinet -- Renewal by mail -- Extension of renewal period for military personnel stationed outside United States -- Exceptions. (Effective until January 1, 2027)

- (1) Before the owner of a motor vehicle, or street-legal special purpose vehicle as defined in KRS 186.077, may operate it or permit its operation upon a highway, the owner shall apply for registration in accordance with administrative regulations promulgated by the cabinet, except that a person who purchases a motor vehicle, or brings a motor vehicle into the Commonwealth from another state shall make application for registration within fifteen (15) days. The bill of sale or assigned title must be in the motor vehicle during this fifteen (15) day period. If the owner of a motor vehicle is an individual and resides in the Commonwealth, the motor vehicle shall be registered with the county clerk of the county in which he or she resides. If the owner of a motor vehicle does not reside in the Commonwealth, the motor vehicle shall be registered with the county clerk of the county in which the motor vehicle is principally operated. If the owner of a motor vehicle is other than an individual and resides in the Commonwealth, the motor vehicle shall be registered with the county clerk of either county. The application when presented to the county clerk for registration shall be accompanied by:
 - (a) A bill of sale and a manufacturer's certificate of origin if the application is for the registration of a new motor vehicle;
 - (b) The owner's registration receipt, if the motor vehicle was last registered in this state;
 - (c) A bill of sale and the previous registration receipt, if last registered in another state where the law of that state does not require the owner of a motor vehicle to obtain a certificate of title or ownership;
 - (d) A certificate of title, if last registered in another state where the law of that state requires the owner of a motor vehicle to obtain a certificate of title or ownership;
 - (e) An affidavit from an officer of a local government saying that the motor vehicle has been abandoned and that the provisions of KRS 82.630 have been complied with, for local governments which elect to use the provisions of KRS 82.600 to 82.640;
 - (f) The application from a person who has brought a motor vehicle into the Commonwealth from another state shall be accompanied by proof that the motor vehicle is insured in compliance with KRS 304.39-080; and
 - (g) Proof of insurance in compliance with KRS 186.077 if the application is for the registration of a street-legal special purpose vehicle.
- (2) After that, except as provided in subsection (6) of this section, the owner of any motor vehicle registered under KRS 186.050(1) or (2) shall register his or her motor vehicle on or before the date on which his or her certificate of registration expires. If, before operating the motor vehicle in this state, the owner registers it at some later date and pays the fee for the full year, he or she will be deemed to have complied with the law. Insofar as the owner is concerned, registration with the clerk

shall be deemed to be registration with the cabinet.

- (3) After that, the owner of any commercial vehicle registered under KRS 186.050(3) to (14) shall register the commercial vehicle on or before April 1 of each year. If, before operating a commercial vehicle in this state, the owner registers it at some later date and pays the required fee, he or she will be deemed to have complied with the law. Insofar as the owner is concerned, registration with the clerk shall be deemed to be registration with the cabinet, except the owner of any commercial motor vehicle to be registered pursuant to the International Registration Plan under KRS 186.050(13) shall register the commercial motor vehicles on or before the last day of the month of registration established pursuant to KRS 186.051(3).
- (4) The application and documents presented for registration, including the sheriff's certificate of inspection, shall, along with the Transportation Cabinet copy of the certificate of title or registration, be sent to the Transportation Cabinet by the clerk.
- (5) At least forty-five (45) days prior to the expiration of registration of any motor vehicle previously registered in the Commonwealth as provided by KRS 186A.035, the owner of the vehicle shall be notified on the same notice required by KRS 134.805(5) of the date of expiration. In addition, the department shall provide appropriate forms and information to permit renewal of motor vehicle registration to be completed by mail. Any registration renewal by mail shall require payment of an additional two dollar (\$2) fee which shall be received by the county clerk. Nonreceipt of the notice under this subsection shall not constitute a defense to any registration related offense.
- (6)
 - (a) If an individual has been serving in the United States military stationed or assigned to a base or other location outside the boundaries of the United States, he or she shall renew the registration on the vehicle within thirty (30) days of his or her return if:
 - 1. The motor vehicle has been stored on a military base during the time of deployment and has not been operated on the public highways during that time; and
 - 2. The vehicle's registration expired during the individual's absence.
 - (b) An individual who meets the criteria in paragraph (a) of this subsection shall not be convicted or cited for driving a vehicle with expired registration within thirty (30) days after the individual's return to the Commonwealth if the individual can provide proof of meeting the eligibility criteria under paragraph (a) of this subsection.
 - (c) When an individual presents evidence of meeting the criteria under paragraph (a) of this subsection when applying to renew the registration on the motor vehicle, the county clerk shall, when applicable, treat the registration as a prorated renewal under KRS 186.051, and charge the individual a registration fee only for the number of months of the registration year the vehicle will be used on the public highways.
- (7) The provisions of this section shall not apply to vehicles or manufactured homes for which permanent registration has been obtained pursuant to KRS 186A.127.

Effective: July 15, 2026

History: Amended 2026 Ky. Acts ch. 135, sec. 6, effective July 15, 2026. -- Amended 2025 Ky. Acts ch. 89, sec. 3, effective June 27, 2025. -- Amended 2022 Ky. Acts ch. 18, sec. 16, effective January 1, 2024. -- Amended 2009 Ky. Acts ch. 10, sec. 65, effective January 1, 2010. -- Amended 2006 Ky. Acts ch. 252, Pt. XXVIII, sec. 14, effective April 25, 2006. -- Amended 1998 Ky. Acts ch. 153, sec. 1, effective July 15, 1998; and ch. 565, sec. 1, effective July 15, 1998. -- Amended 1996 Ky. Acts ch. 97, sec. 2, effective July 15, 1996; and ch. 341, sec. 4, effective July 15, 1996. -- Amended 1994 Ky. Acts ch. 428, sec. 2, effective July 15, 1994. -- Amended 1986 Ky. Acts ch. 363, sec. 1, effective July 15, 1986; and ch. 431, sec. 9, effective July 15, 1986. -- Amended 1984 Ky. Acts ch. 416, sec. 9, effective July 13, 1984. -- Amended 1982 Ky. Acts ch. 203, sec. 2, effective July 15, 1982. -- Amended 1980 Ky. Acts ch. 296, sec. 1, effective July 15, 1980. -- Amended 1978 Ky. Acts ch. 239, sec. 2, effective June 17, 1978. -- Amended 1976 Ky. Acts ch. 133, sec. 4, effective June 19, 1976. -- Amended 1974 Ky. Acts ch. 74, Art. IV, sec. 20(2). -- Amended 1966 Ky. Acts ch. 139, sec. 3, effective January 1, 1967. -- Amended 1958 Ky. Acts ch. 82, sec. 1, effective January 1, 1960. -- Amended 1954 Ky. Acts ch. 153, sec. 1. - - Amended 1946 Ky. Acts ch. 208, sec. 1. -- Recodified 1942 Ky. Acts ch. 208, sec. 1, effective October 1, 1942, from Ky. Stat. secs. 2739g-2a, 2739g-9.