

5-01/110.25 - License Plates - Duplicate/Substitute

The California Department of Motor Vehicles issues duplicate and substitute license plates.

Duplicate plates are issued to replace lost, mutilated, or destroyed plates issued to an individual (personalized plates, amateur radio station/unit call letters plates, etc.) when so requested by the owner. A SVS check will confirm when DMV has issued duplicate plates for these reasons. A new registration certificate will bear the same license number as the duplicate plates, but the registration itself will not be marked duplicate.

Personalized plates will not be duplicated or reissued by DMV if reported stolen. In some instances, plates which have been stolen are being reported as lost in order to obtain duplicates.

When a vehicle bearing such personalized plates is stopped, caution should be exercised until an SVS check confirms if the plates are duplicates or the vehicle or plates are stolen and further investigation shall be made immediately.

The hit might be on the plate that was reported stolen; however, the plates on the stopped vehicle could be a legitimate duplicate set issued to replace the original set.

Before an arrest is made, investigate all possibilities:

- Verify VIN;
- Interview the driver to determine if he has applied for duplicate plates;
- A new registration certificate, issued with duplicate plates, will be dated later than the date shown on the stolen report. The registration certificate issued at the time the original plates were issued would have a date prior to the stolen;
- Check with agency reporting the stolen; and
- If the operator is other than the owner, it may be necessary to contact the owner.

Substitute plates are issued to replace lost, stolen, or mutilated plates issued to a vehicle. The substitute plate will not bear the same number as the license plate it is replacing. A new registration certificate will be issued showing the number of the new plate issued.
