



## **NJ REAL ID Deadline Nearing, Appointments Tough to Find**

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NEW JERSEY — Seven months may seem like a long time. But with New Jersey's REAL ID requirements set to take effect May 3, appointments for obtaining the documentation remain difficult to secure.

The New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission allows residents to make appointments for upgrading to the federal REAL ID at all 24 licensing centers. But as of Thursday afternoon, 15 showed no appointments available. While some had a handful of appointments available starting in December, three South Jersey facilities hold the bulk of the available slots: Rio Grande (940 appointments available, starting Oct. 27), Salem (667 available, beginning Oct. 31) and Vineland (109 available, starting Nov. 18).

Starting May 3, you must have a REAL ID-compliant driver's license to fly within the United States, unless you use a valid U.S. passport. The standard driver's license will remain valid for driving.

REAL ID is available at license/ID renewal appointments for customers with a license or ID expiring within three months. The renewal appointments are far easier to secure at facilities throughout the state.

But not everyone will fit into that three-month-expiration window before May 3. So the MVC continues efforts to increase availability for REAL ID appointments.

"Thousands of appointments are added each business day," said NJMVC spokesperson William Connolly, "and we have regularly expanded the total number of REAL ID opportunities in recent months to better meet demand, a process that will continue."

The MVC also issues REAL IDs by appointment at Mobile Unit events and dedicated Saturday REAL ID, with all appointments scheduled on the [agency's website](#).

### **Do I need a REAL ID?**

You're not required to get a REAL ID. But starting May 3, a typical driver's license or non-driver ID will become invalid for domestic flights. Travelers will need a passport or REAL ID to fly, but the standard New Jersey driver's license will remain valid for driving.

### **Will the REAL ID look different from a traditional driver's license or non-driver ID?**

The REAL ID has a star in the upper-right corner. The standard driver's license or ID looks similar but will have the words "NOT FOR 'REAL ID' PURPOSES" printed on them.

### **What do I need to bring to my REAL ID appointment?**

Residents must bring the [required REAL ID documents](#) — two proofs of residential address, one verifiable Social Security number, and identity documents that add up to 6 REAL ID points. Confirm at the beginning of your appointment that you'd like to get a REAL ID driver's license or non-driver ID.

### **Will REAL ID cost more than a standard license or ID?**

Yes. REAL ID costs \$35, while the standard New Jersey license/ID costs \$24.

### **Why is the MVC scanning or storing my information?**

According to the agency, "It is a federal requirement for security purposes that we scan the documents and keep them securely stored in an encrypted format."

### **Is my information shared with the federal government?**

Yes. Your identification documents will be verified and, under certain circumstances, shared with the federal government. The Department of Homeland Security [has more info](#).

### **What if I lose my New Jersey REAL ID?**

You can [get a duplicate online](#).

### **Why will REAL ID become a federal requirement?**

The answer goes back nearly two decades, when then-President George W. Bush signed the REAL ID Act of 2005 into law. The law set forth federal requirements for standardizing state driver's licenses and ID cards. The REAL ID Act also tightens laws for immigrants to apply for asylum and waives regulations that interfere with constructing physical barriers at borders.

The law has faced criticism from throughout the political spectrum, including from libertarian groups [such as the Cato Institute](#); immigrant-advocacy and civil-rights organizations, such as the [American Civil Liberties Union](#); Christian-advocacy groups such as the [American Center for Law & Justice](#); and firearm-advocacy organizations, such as [Gun Owners of America](#).

Privacy-rights advocates have claimed that creating a national system that electronically stores vast amounts of personal data increases the risk of identity theft and makes government surveillance easier. Supporters of the REAL ID Act, such as conservative think tank The Heritage

Foundation, dismiss the criticism and say that states will only be allowed to share data when validating someone's identity.

New Jersey originally intended to begin issuing REAL IDs in 2012. But the MVC agreed to drop the plan as part of a settlement in a lawsuit the ACLU brought.