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NORTH CAROLINA  
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
DIVISION OF MOTOR VEHICLES

# A USER'S GUIDE TO NORTH CAROLINA HANDICAP PARKING PLACARDS AND PLATES



# NORTH CAROLINA HANDICAP PARKING PLACARDS AND PLATES

North Carolina law provides for parking assistance to vehicle owners whose medical professionals have certified as being unable to walk without assistance or who have restrictions caused by lung disease, defective vision, or cardiac, arthritic, neurological or orthopedic conditions (N.C. General Statutes 20-37.6).

The North Carolina Division of Motor Vehicles provides three types of handicap licensing:

- Five-year handicap parking placard
- Temporary (up to six months) handicap parking placard
- Handicap driver registration plate/tag

## HOW DO I OBTAIN A HANDICAP PLATE OR PARKING PLACARD?

Your doctor must certify to NCDMV that you have a mobility impairment linked to one or more of the conditions listed above. You may obtain an application form for a handicap parking placard/tag from any DMV license plate agency, or download one at [http://www.ncdot.org/dmv/vehicle\\_services/licenseplates/handicapped.html](http://www.ncdot.org/dmv/vehicle_services/licenseplates/handicapped.html). Your doctor's office may also provide the application forms.

## WHO MAY USE A HANDICAP PLATE OR PLACARD?

Placards and plates are to be used only for transporting the handicapped to whom they are issued. Parking placards must be displayed inside the vehicles from the rearview mirror. Plates, which carry the International Symbol of Access — a wheelchair — replace usual license plates on the back of the vehicle.

Only the individual who is issued the placard or plate may use handicap parking privileges.

## WHEN MAY I USE HANDICAP PARKING?

Handicap parking may be used ONLY when the person to whom the placard or plate was issued is in the vehicle. If that person is not in the car, the driver MAY NOT use the handicap placard/plate.

## MAY I USE SOMEONE ELSE'S HANDICAP PLACARD IF...

**Example 1:** You are a disabled veteran with a handicap license tag. Your grandchild borrows your car. They may NOT use handicap parking and will be subject to posted fines if they do so. You should warn them NOT to park in handicap parking spaces.

**Example 2:** You will "only be a minute," so you use your Mom's handicap placard even though she is not with you. This is illegally parking in handicap spaces and you will be subject to posted fines.

**Example 3:** You have sprained your ankle. You use your Mom's handicap placard, although she is not along. Is this legal? The answer is no. You have not been found to be disabled. While you have a temporary disability, the placard was not issued to you. Therefore, you cannot legally park in handicap spaces.

## IS THE NORTH CAROLINA HANDICAP PLACARD OR PLATE RECOGNIZED IN OTHER STATES?

Yes. Other states recognize North Carolina placards and plates. In addition, local law enforcement will honor valid placards from other states or countries.

## HOW DO I RENEW A PARKING PLACARD?

- Temporary placards are issued for one to six months and are therefore not renewable.
- Five-year placards may only be renewed with the recertification of a physician. Each placard costs \$5.
- Handicap driver registration plates/tags must be renewed by sticker annually and recertified by your physician every five years. The regular registration plate fee applies to these plates.

## WHERE CAN I PARK USING MY PLATE OR PLACARD?

If you have a valid handicap placard or plate, you may use spaces marked for the handicapped without time limits. In many, but not all jurisdictions, you may also park longer than posted in any non-handicap parking space.

## WHERE SHOULD I NOT PARK?

You may not park in fire lanes, loading zones, or any area marked with striped lines. You may not obstruct the entrance or exit to a property with your vehicle.

## WHAT IS THE PENALTY FOR PARKING ILLEGALLY IN A SPACE DESIGNATED FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES?

Parking spaces for handicapped driver/owners are required to be marked with a sign designating the maximum penalty for parking in the space in violation of the law. It is unlawful to park or leave standing any vehicle that does not carry a valid handicap placard or plate in a handicap parking space. It is also unlawful to block or obstruct a curb ramp or curb cut for handicapped persons, as provided under the North Carolina Building Code.

Violations of these parking requirements are infractions which carry penalties of \$100 to \$250.

Additionally, law enforcement officers may order a vehicle in violation of this section to be towed. Provisions relative to parking in spaces marked and reserved for handicapped people are enforced by state, county and municipal authorities in their jurisdictions and may be subject to citations and fines.

## WHAT IS A "VAN ACCESSIBLE" HANDICAP PARKING SPACE?

The average handicap space is 60 inches wide while van accessible spaces are 96 inches wide. They provide enough room for ramps or lifts to allow wheelchairs to exit safely.

## WHAT ARE THE STRIPED AISLES IN PARKING LOTS?

Striped aisles, or access aisles, are used for wheelchair transfer, walker use and for ramps and lifts to operate safely. Van accessible spaces are usually next to access aisles. Leave striped access aisles free for wheelchairs and walkers.

## WHICH HANDICAP SPACE SHOULD I PARK IN?

If you are handicapped and use a small vehicle, do not park in the van accessible space. Park in the space that fits your vehicle and your disability. Save the van accessible space for a wheelchair accessible van.