

Ham How To Get A Call License Plate And Avoid The Hassle

The State of Florida offers amateur radio operators the opportunity to put their call signs on certain license plates, even if you are leasing the auto. To be eligible, your vehicle must weigh less than 7,000lbs. and not have a commercial tag. Sorry, no motorcycles or trailers, but motor homes are okay.

I recently went through a lengthy wait at the tag office in Lake Wales. The lady that helped me has worked there for six years and never had a request for a "amateur radio" tag. I patiently waited as she got her supervisor and one other employee involved, and they worked out the problem. Maybe they worked harder for me because I smiled and told them I was not leaving til they figured it out.

It's really pretty simple, once they find the proper code for the ham tag (see below). It took a while for them to find the code, and at one point they asked if I would settle for a "Save The Whale" tag instead. I declined the offer and the nice lady said, "If you are determined, you better go get a cot and put it against the far wall, we're gonna be here a while."

You must take along your driver's license, proof of insurance card, your ham license, and, of course...your registration for the vehicle you wish to put the tag on.

The person that assisted me, put all the information in her computer and then gave me a printed copy to look over and sign. She brought up a sample of a regular tag that showed my call sign, but it was "flush left" on the tag. So, in the comments section of a form, she noted that the computer would not allow her to "center" the call, but the customer requests it be centered. She said if it comes in and is wrong, they will send it back with further instructions to "center" the call. Takes about 15 days to get it.

Although the State website says cost is \$15 extra, that's not where the charges stop. In addition to the \$15 application fee, they tack on a \$23.30 fee for manufacturing the new plate, and \$3.00 County fee. The total I paid was \$41.30. However, when the tag is mailed to you, you may return your previous tag to the office for a refund of the unused portion. Then, the new amateur tag will renew annually on your birth date, as normal, and it only costs a dollar more than you usually pay each year.

I inquired of tags that might show your call in their system being the same number issued to someone else. The supervisor said that some times "old" numbers remain in the system although they have expired. They can tell if the number is actually current in the state, and not available to you, when they begin inputting information for your particular call. If there IS a vanity or ham tag with the same number, they will not issue another.

The lady who helped me was Brenda, at Desk #1. She advised that now she knows how to do it, she can help everyone in the club when they want a call sign tag. Go into the Polk County Tax Collector's office on East 60. **DO NOT TAKE A NUMBER!** Just stick your head in at Desk #1 and tell Brenda you're there for an amateur radio tag. She

will give you further instructions. I found the Lake Wales office to be customer friendly and willing to search out what was needed. I have listed everything below, so if you go there and somehow get assigned to another employee, you can assist with the codes, etc.

1. Take your registration, insurance card, driver's license and ham license with you.
2. Remind them the "Plate Code Type" is RGA.
3. The "Plate Code Description" is Florida Amateur Radio
4. Be certain to remind them to "center" the call on the plate

Good Luck! You're well on your way to displaying your call sign for all to see.

73

John

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