



VEHICLE EQUIPMENT SAFETY COMMISSION

Regulation VESC-18

STANDARDIZED REPLACEMENT
VEHICLE IDENTIFICATION NUMBER SYSTEM

Approved August 1979

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STANDARDIZED REPLACEMENT VIN SYSTEM

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To assure that all vehicles subject to title and/or registration are readily identifiable through the verification of a manufacturer's Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) or state issued replacement or assigned identification number.

2. SCOPE:

- 2.1 The scope of this regulation is to establish a national uniform Replacement VIN Standard.

3. DEFINITIONS:

- 3.1 *VIN* – Vehicle Identification Number – The number assigned to a vehicle by the manufacturer. It may consist of numerals, letters, or combinations thereof and is used primarily for registration and identification purposes.
- 3.2 *Replacement VIN* – The vehicle's original VIN reproduced on a replacement identification number plate and attached to the vehicle.
- 3.3 *Assigned VIN* – A number pre-assigned, imprinted or embossed; on an assigned identification number VIN plate, then attached to a vehicle that has no identifiable VIN or whose VIN has been destroyed or removed. For purposes of national uniformity, the assigned number shall not exceed sixteen (16) characters in length and shall incorporate the two character alphabetic state code as defined in 3.13 of this regulation. The code shall precede and be an integral part of the assigned number.
- 3.4 *Public VIN*: A vehicle identification number located in a conspicuous location on a vehicle for easy access to law enforcement personnel and other interested parties.
- 3.5 *Secondary VIN*: A vehicle identification number, or VIN derivative, stamped in an area, the location of which is kept confidential for law enforcement's use.
- 3.6 *VIN PLATE*: Throughout this regulation, the term VIN plate

means replacement identification number plate or assigned identification number plate unless otherwise stated.

- 3.7 *SVFS* – Stolen Vehicle File System – A state system used for maintaining records of vehicles reported stolen, and the agency responsible for the theft report.
- 3.8 *NATB* – National Automobile Theft Bureau – A non-profit, insurance industry supported service organization established for the purpose of assisting law enforcement in all aspects of suppressing vehicle thefts.
- 3.9 *Pan Number* – A term unique to Volkswagen, pan number is a repeat of the public VIN located on the floor pan under the rear seat of Volkswagen “Beetle” model vehicles.
- 3.10 *A Pillar (Front Door Pillar Post)* – A post located forward of the front door running between the door and windshield. Replacement and assigned VINs should normally be affixed to the left door pillar post.
- 3.11 *B Pillar (Front Door Latch Post)* – The post located at the trailing edge of the front door to which the door latches. This is an alternate location for attachment of the VIN plate.
- 3.12 *State Logo Die Stamp* – A hand-held hardened steel die stamp normally in the shape of the state seal or outline of the state’s border.
- 3.13 *State Code* – The two-character alphabetic code as utilized by the U.S. Post Office for abbreviations of states’ names.
- 3.14 *Component* – A major vehicle component originally stamped by the manufacturer with a unique identifiable number traceable to the vehicle through the vehicle manufacturer.

4. POLICY:

- 4.1 *A Replacement Vehicle Identification Numbering System* shall be administered by the state agency responsible for titling and registering vehicles, hereafter referred to as the “Registration Agency.” The operational functions of the Replacement Vehicle Identification Numbering may be carried out by the Registration Agency and/or a statewide law enforcement agency referred to as “Enforcement Agency.”

4.2 *Vehicles to Be Processed* – The Replacement VIN Program shall provide for the inspection of rebuilt salvage and specially constructed vehicles; all vehicles and identifiable components with missing or altered identification numbers; and those vehicles where discrepancies are noted between the VIN recorded on the title or other ownership documents and the public VIN on the vehicle.

4.3 *Interstate Transfers and/or Retitling* – The installation of a VESC replacement or assigned VIN plate on a vehicle by any state in accordance with 4.1 and 4.2 above shall be deemed to be in compliance and no other state shall require the removal or replacement of such plate in interstate transfer or subsequent retitling of said vehicle.

5. PROCEDURE:

5.1 *Application for VIN Assignment* – Persons, other than those primarily doing business as manufacturers of new vehicles, attempting to initiate proceedings for the initial assignment or reassignment of a vehicle identification number shall apply to the Registration Agency for the purpose of completing an application form.

5.2 *Completed VIN Application* – Upon completion of the application form, the Registration Agency shall initiate the registration process and refer the applicant to the appropriate agency for inspection and assignment of a Vehicle Identification Number.

5.3 *Enforcement Contact* – Vehicles coming to the attention of law enforcement agencies which need assignment or reassignment of an identification number shall be referred to the Registration Agency to initiate the assignment process.

6. IDENTIFICATION FUNCTION:

6.1 The official designated to perform VIN inspections shall attempt to identify the vehicle or component. In instances where the original identification number can be established, the inspecting official shall provide and attach a Replacement VIN Identification Number plate repeating the original identification number. Where no original identification number exists or it cannot be determined, an assigned VIN shall be provided on an assigned VIN plate. Every attempt shall be made to identify

the vehicle or component by means of the public number. If the public VIN for vehicles cannot be determined, the secondary VIN shall be examined subject to the following conditions:

- A. *Secondary VIN Search* — No such search or examination should be conducted in a location which is open to public view or in the presence of unauthorized persons.
 - B. *Secondary VIN Location* — Secondary VIN locations shall be obtained from the appropriate agency on a need to know basis.
 - (1) If the secondary vehicle identification number of a vehicle has been located and recorded but does not readily identify the vehicle, the applicant shall be advised further checking will be required and he/she will be contacted later to return with the vehicle to complete the process.
 - (2) The investigating official shall submit the secondary VIN to the appropriate agency which may cause an inquiry to be prepared and sent to National Automobile Theft Bureau (NATB) for factory information. On receipt of the requested information, the requesting official shall contact the applicant for completion of the identification procedure and VIN assignment.
 - C. *Security* — Complete security of secondary VIN locations is essential. This information shall not be written and maintained by other than the appropriate agency.
- 6.2 *Inability to Identify VIN* — If the inspecting official is unable to positively identify a vehicle and has reason to believe that the original identifying number has been intentionally removed or altered, or if the ownership documents submitted are questionable, he/she shall refer the matter to the appropriate Enforcement Agency.
- 6.3 *Inability to Identify Vehicle* — A vehicle with valid ownership documents but no identification numbers which can be restored shall be provided an assigned VIN.
- 6.4 *Component Identification* — Identifiable components shall be provided an assigned VIN *only when a manufacturer's number has been previously removed, altered, or defaced, and the request results from a court directive, an enforcement document, or when the component has been impounded by proper authority.*

7. VIN PLATES:

7.1 Upon completion of the inspection process, the investigating official shall provide either a replacement or assigned VIN plate. VIN plates shall meet the following design characteristics:

A. The VIN plate shall be made of anodized aluminum foil. The plates shall have an adhesive backing with tamper proof features (self-destruct capability) and designed to be affixed with two tamper proof rivets with stainless steel pins. (Except rivets shall not be used on motorcycle engine cases and oil filled motorcycle frames.) Each VIN plate shall carry a control number for accountability purposes.

7.2 *Security and Accountability of VIN Plates* — Replacement VIN plates shall be requisitioned from the office of the agency responsible for the operational function of the Replacement VIN Program. Plates shall be stored in a locked container and access restricted to authorized employees.

7.3 *Detached or Mutilated Replacement or Assigned VIN Plates* — When a vehicle has been issued either an assigned or replacement VIN number, a substitute plate bearing the same numbers as previously assigned shall be issued when:

A. The applicant makes available the vehicle upon which the mutilated plate is affixed. In this instance, the replacement plate shall be removed by the inspecting official.

B. If already detached, the plate shall be surrendered to the inspecting official.

C. A Statement of Facts describing the change shall be prepared and forwarded to the appropriate agency. The removed plates shall be forwarded to the appropriate agency for accountability purposes.

(1) Any replacement or assigned VIN plate which is damaged prior to or during the application, or a replacement VIN plate on which a numbering error occurs, shall be forwarded to the appropriate agency maintaining assignment records within one working day following occurrence of the damage or error.

- (2) Each replacement or assigned VIN plate being returned shall be rendered unuseable prior to mailing. This is to be accomplished by cutting the plate in half diagonally, but *care must be exercised to prevent cutting through or otherwise destroying the legibility of the control number.*

7.4 *Lost Assigned VIN Plates* — When a vehicle has been issued an assigned VIN plate and the plate is lost, a substitute plate bearing that number *shall not* be issued. It will be necessary to identify the vehicle by issuing a newly assigned VIN number.

- A. When a new number is assigned, it will be necessary to treat the transaction as a new application due to the change in identity.

7.5 *Removal of Damaged Manufacturer's VIN Plates* — VIN plates which are damaged or mutilated shall be removed by the owner or his/her designated agent in the presence of the investigating official prior to the affixing of a replacement VIN plate.

8. VIN PLATE ATTACHMENT GUIDELINES:

8.1 Except as otherwise noted, a replacement or assigned VIN plate shall be affixed to the left front door pillar post of the vehicle.

- A. *Alternate Attachment Location* — On those vehicles where the left front door pillar post design will not permit attaching of the VIN plate, the plate shall be attached to the left front door latch post.

9. ASSIGNMENT GUIDELINES: EXCEPTIONS

9.1 *PRE-1969 VOLKSWAGENS* — For purposes of these guidelines, the pan number shall be considered the VIN. If a Volkswagen is inspected and has a valid pan number and the number in the forward luggage compartment is missing, mutilated, altered, or does not match the pan number, the pan number will be repeated on a replacement VIN plate and attached next to the original VIN plate location in the forward luggage compartment.

- A. If a Volkswagen does not have a satisfactory pan number or the identifying numbers are missing and cannot be identified, the vehicle shall be referred to the appropriate agency for investigation.

9.2 MOTORCYCLES

- A. In the event an applicant is in possession of a motorcycle from which the engine or frame number has been removed, altered, or destroyed, the inspecting official shall immediately contact the appropriate agency for investigation. Should the official performing the inspection be unable to contact an investigator, with concurrence of a supervisor, the motorcycle may be impounded for further investigation as may be permitted by statute. In this event, the discrepancy shall be resolved to the satisfaction of the appropriate agency before any VIN plate is issued or attached. After the discrepancy has been resolved:

- (1) The inspecting official shall affix the plate to the clean surface area on the frame near the headstock (left side is the primary location). If this area is impaired by wiring harnesses or other obstructions, the right side is the alternate location. The plate shall not be applied to the headstock proper; drilling in this location may damage the vehicle's steering system.

- (2) The engine number on *all* motorcycles shall be recorded on the application form.

- B. When an assembled motorcycle has a legitimate engine number but an unnumbered frame, the inspecting official shall record the valid engine number and attach an assigned VIN to the unnumbered frame.
- C. If an assembled motorcycle presented for inspection has a legitimate frame number but an unnumbered engine, the inspecting official shall record the valid frame number and attach an assigned VIN plate to the unnumbered engine.
- D. When an assembled motorcycle presented for inspection has neither a frame number nor engine number, the inspecting official shall attach separate assigned VIN numbers to each. Duplicate numbers *shall not* be issued to frame and engine. The inspecting official shall:

- (1) Assign a separate assigned VIN plate to either the frame or engine in all cases.
- (2) Clean all dirt and grease from a clearly visible area on the engine case, as close as is practicable to where an original engine number would be located:
 - (a) Affix the assigned VIN to the clear surface area.
 - (b) Using the State Logo, die stamp an impression of the logo into *both ends* of the assigned VIN plate. The die must be in a position which will permit an overlap from the VIN plate onto the metal surface of the engine case. This does not preclude the inspecting official from utilizing the logo stamp on additional areas of a vehicle for future points of identification if agreeable to the owner.

9.3 TRAILERS:

- A. Trailers presented for VIN assignment shall have the appropriate VIN plate placed on the left side of the tongue portion of the frame if it is permanently attached to the vehicle. If the tongue is not permanently attached, the VIN plate shall be attached to the left frame rail at the front of the vehicle.

9.4 SPECIALLY CONSTRUCTED VEHICLES:

- A. Newly constructed vehicles which are void of any specially assigned or readily identifiable numbers shall be provided an assigned VIN to be used as the public number.
- B. Vehicles constructed from readily identifiable, traceable vehicle components shall be designated as specially constructed vehicles, e.g., Honda engine in a Harley Davidson frame. In these circumstances, simple verification of the numbers without any VIN plate attachment will satisfy the identification process required by the Registration Agency.
- C. The inspecting official shall record, on the application, all supplemental identifying numbers found on the vehicles, e.g., transmission number or any numbers on accessory equipment.

D. If assignment of a public VIN is necessary on specially constructed vehicles other than motorcycles and trailers, the inspecting official shall affix the plate to a clean, visible surface on the left front door pillar post. If this is not possible due to construction of the vehicle, alternate visible locations are:

- (1) The left front door latch post.
- (2) The frame on the left side of the vehicle in the engine compartment area.
- (3) On the top of the frame tunnel adjacent to the shifting lever. (This location should be used for specially constructed sand or dune buggies whenever possible.)
- (4) Left side of dash or steering column support.

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