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Easy-to-fake temporary paper tags from car dealerships are out, MVC says

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By

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The infamous New Jersey “ghost tag” is heading to the graveyard.

New Jersey’s temporary paper tags, typically issued by auto dealers when a new or used vehicle is sold, that were easy to counterfeit as “ghost tags,” will be replaced by a tougher-to-fake version [under a new state law](#) that’s beginning to be implemented.

MVC officials announced Monday the agency is beginning to roll out new temporary tags that use a different look and are printed on enhanced paper. The use of the new tags will be expanded throughout the summer.

“The new temporary registration tags will have a new format and will be printed on new paper that utilizes enhanced security features for the purpose of preventing forgery or duplication of the temporary registration tag,” said William Connolly, an MVC spokesperson.

The new temporary tags comply with a law signed by Gov. Phil Murphy in January that tightened up regulations on temporary license plates or paper tags issued by car dealers. The law increases fines for dealers that sell fraudulent “ghost tags” and drivers that use them to evade tolls and drive unregistered vehicles.

The current paper tags became the bane of toll agencies in the bi-state area because they were being sold on social media online marketplaces and typically used to avoid paying tolls at Port Authority and MTA bridges and tunnels.

At a May 2022 press conference, MTA CEO Janno Lieber [held up a fake New Jersey Temporary tag](#) and announced an MTA crackdown on fake and obscured license plates used by toll cheats.

In 2023, the MTA and police impounded 143 vehicles owing \$3.2 million in tolls and fines during multiple enforcement blitzes at the Verrazzano-Narrows Bridge, where many impounded vehicles had paper tags from New Jersey.

Port Authority officials have conducted similar crackdowns on toll evaders. Last year, the bi-state authority collected \$25 million in back tolls and fees owed by evaders. In 2023, Port Authority Police issued 5,861 toll evasions-related summonses, including 4,446 summonses to drivers with obstructed, missing or fictitious license plates.

“Ghost tags enable vehicle to be driven that are uninsured, unregistered, and often by unlicensed individuals,” said Lenis Valens, a Port Authority spokesperson. “Any measures that hinder the procurement of fraudulent temporary tags will decrease the

presence of such vehicles on the road, aiding both tolling agencies and law enforcement.”

As of June 30, Port Authority police have issued 195 summons for fictitious license plates which included temporary tags and permanent license plates, she said. Last year 256 summons were issued for that offense.

During May 2023 transportation budget hearings, lawmakers questioned state Motor Vehicle Commission officials after [a Streetsblog investigation revealed that paper tags could be bought](#) from some New Jersey dealers online without purchasing a vehicle from them.

That led state Senate Majority Leader [Teresa Ruiz](#), D-Essex, and state Sen. Nilsa Cruz-Perez, D-Camden, to propose the legislation that Murphy signed.

MVC officials said the phaseout of the old paper and tag format will be completed by early fall.

Another part of the law that required better tracking of temporary tags also is underway with the establishing a vehicle registry for dealers to share information with the MVC, expected to launch in 2025, officials said. Part of that is intended to ensure a temporary tag is issued for a vehicle a dealer has sold.

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