

FOREIGN DRIVER'S LICENCE IN ZIMBABWE

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THE SHORT VERSION:

- A foreign driver's licence or an International Driving Permit (IDP) is accepted in Zimbabwe if valid, and in respect of the class of motor vehicle.
- The IDP must be presented with the holder's original foreign driver's licence.
- The holder of a foreign driver's licence **MAY** apply for the issue of a Zimbabwean driver's licence - one is not obliged to. (See cost and requirements below). Application is made at Central Vehicle Registry, tel. (04) 752535 (Harare)
- A driver's licence represents an identity document and it is **NOT** a legal requirement to also produce one's passport. However Big Sky's advice to anyone driving on a foreign driver's licence or IDP in the region is to carry one's passport, or at the very least a certified copy of the information page and the page showing the entry visa or residents' permit. Although not a legal requirement, this will reduce roadside debates.

THE LONG VERSION:

The Road Traffic Act [*Chapter 13:11*], (Act), regulates the position on foreign driver's licence and international driving permits. Section 18(1) of the Act states that any person who is not ordinarily resident in Zimbabwe and who is a holder of a foreign driver's licence or an international driving permit issued in accordance with the requirements of the convention in any State, Territory or Province outside Zimbabwe to which the convention applies shall during the period of validity of such foreign driver's licence or international driving permit **be deemed to be the holder of a driver's licence issued in respect of the class of motor vehicle to which the foreign driver's licence or international drivers permit relates.**

In terms of the Road Traffic Amendment Act, 2000 which substituted section 19 of the Act, provides that any person who has been issued a certificate or permit other than a visitor's entry certificate in terms of the immigration laws of Zimbabwe permitting him/her to stay in Zimbabwe either temporarily or permanently and holds a foreign driver's licence or international driving permit issued in accordance with the requirements of the convention in any State, Territory or Province outside Zimbabwe to which the convention applies **MAY** apply to the registrar for the issue of a driver's licence in respect of the class of motor vehicle to which his foreign driver's licence or international driving permit relates.

When a holder of a foreign driver's licence or international driving permit who wishes to apply to the Registrar for the issue of a Zimbabwean driver's licence, he must be accompanied by the following:-

- 1) A prescribed fee of US\$100; and
- 2) Documents issued by the Immigration department stating your immigration status; and
- 3) Two black and white drivers licence size photographs; and
- 4) Certified copies of the foreign driver's licence or international driving permit, if not in English, a translation of its contents into English which is certified by the holder of a foreign driver's licence or international driving permit's embassy or by Notary Public of his country of origin

On receipt of this application, the Registrar may issue to the holder of a foreign driver's licence or international driving permit a Zimbabwean drivers licence in respect of the class of motor vehicle concerned. However, the Zimbabwean drivers licence that may be issued to a holder of a foreign driver's licence or international driving permit are of light vehicles which falls in classes 3, 4 and 5. Heavy vehicles which fall in classes 1 and 2 are not issued because the legislation which determines the standards of such classes on the holder of a foreign driver's licence or international driving permit's country of origin may be different from those of Zimbabwe. A foreign driver's licence or international driving permit which expired within six months before the application for issue of a Zimbabwean licence is regarded as valid. **On being issued with a Zimbabwean driver's licence, the holder is not expected to forfeit one's foreign driver's licence.**

Zimbabwe is one of the contracting parties to the Vienna Convention on Road Traffic 1968, hereinafter referred to as "the Convention", which is the convention which regulates, amongst other things, international driving permits. The accession by the Zimbabwean government was made on 31 July 1981. Article 41(2)(a) of the convention states that any contracting parties (*contracting party meaning any country which is party to the convention*) shall recognise any international permit conforming to the provisions of Annexure seven of the Convention, on condition that it is presented with the corresponding domestic driving permit which is valid for driving in their territories a vehicle within the categories covered by the permits. Further, the permit must be valid and that they were issued by another contracting Party. **Driving permits issued by a contracting party shall be recognized in the territory of another contracting party until this territory becomes the place of normal residence of their holder.**

In a number of instances, holders of foreign driver's licences are being requested to produce passports at Zimbabwean police check points, accident scenes *etc.* The law states that it is important for one to produce any of your identity documents, and in this instance the foreign drivers licence is sufficient. In terms of a number of legislation which includes section thirty-two of the Public Order and Security Act [Chapter 11:17], section thirteen of the Money Laundering and Proceeds of Crime Act [Chapter 9:24], section 187(al)(ii) of the Companies Act [Chapter 24:03] and section two of Bank Use Promotion Act [Chapter 24:24] **defines an identity document as any passport, identity document or driver's licence issued by a foreign government.**

In terms of section 32 of Public Order and Security Act [Chapter 11:17], any person (motorists included) of or above the age of sixteen years shall, when in a public place carry an identity document on his person and a police officer may at any time require a person of or above sixteen years of age to produce an identity document. In this case, an identity document refers to any of the above documents mentioned in the above legislation. That being said, it will be improper for a police officer to compel a holder of a foreign driver's licence who has already produced his drivers licence to produce a passport at police check points, accident scenes, *etc.* **Failure to produce a passport and being fined for failure to produce a passport falls outside the mandate of such police officers and such mandate falls in the purview of immigration officials.**



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