

5 FAQs

About the Real ID



Storing your legal and financial documents efficiently can help you prepare to meet life's challenges—from paying bills to filing taxes, enrolling a child in school to estate planning, and everything in between. Understanding what you can discard, which papers you should hold onto (and for how long), and how to organize it all can save you time, energy, and space.

Below, we list five frequently asked questions about the enforcement of the REAL ID and what is needed to obtain one.

What is the REAL ID?

In 2005, Congress passed The REAL ID Act, which established minimum security standards for state-issued driver's licenses and identification cards. It was created in response to the 9/11 attacks to prevent any future terrorist attacks against the U.S. While some states began enforcing the Act in the 2010s, all U.S. states became compliant in 2020 and territories as recent as 2024.

What Happens After the Enforcement Date?

After May 7th, 2025, if you are over the age of 18 and do not have a REAL ID, passport, passport card, or other TSA-accepted identification, you will not be permitted to fly domestically in the United States. This rule will be enforced by the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) at all U.S. airports. If you are traveling by sea on a cruise, the REAL ID is not accepted, and you must have a passport.

If you live in Washington, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, or Vermont, Enhanced Driver's Licenses (EDL) are considered acceptable alternatives to REAL ID-compliant cards and will also be accepted for official REAL ID purposes.

For more information on acceptable alternative identification at a TSA checkpoint, visit the TSA's webpage: <https://www.tsa.gov/travel/security-screening/identification>.

How Do I Get a REAL ID?

You will need to visit your state of residence's DMV to be issued or renew your REAL ID. In some states, you are able to renew your REAL ID online.

What Documents Will I Need to Bring to My DMV?

The required documents to apply for a REAL ID vary by state. At a minimum, you must provide documentation showing your:

- Full Legal Name
- Date of Birth
- Social Security Number
- Two Proofs of Address of Principal Residence
- Lawful Status

For detailed information on what other documents are required for your state, please check your state's driver's licensing agency website before visiting them in person to apply.

How Do I Know if My ID is Compliant?

REAL ID-compliant cards will have one of the below markings on the upper top portion of the card. If the card does not have one of these markings, it is not a REAL ID-compliant license and can't be used to board commercial aircraft.



Source: Staff, N. (2021, August 6). REAL ID: What notaries need to know. National Notary Association. <https://www.nationalnotary.org/notary-bulletin/blog/2019/03/real-id-what-notaries-need-to-know>

EXAMPLE OF A REAL ID CARD IN ILLINOIS



Source: REAL ID. (n.d.). Retrieved April 4, 2025, from <https://realid.ilsos.gov/>

Final Thoughts

As a reminder, if you would prefer to use a passport, passport card, or other TSA-approved documentation, you are able to do so. However, having a REAL ID can be easier as it fits in your wallet and allows you to fly domestically without having to worry about keeping your passport safe during your trip. To check if you are REAL ID ready, visit the Department of Homeland Security's REAL ID page.