

What is aircraft registration?

Private non-commercial aircraft based in Wisconsin are required to either obtain registration or file for an exemption. Wisconsin aircraft registration was first implemented in the 1950s at the same time that private aircraft were exempted from the local property tax. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) issues Federal registration for aircraft.

Do aircraft actually have license plates?

No. All aircraft are issued an "N" number by the FAA, for example "N-1234." This number must be displayed on a visible part of the aircraft. Having an "N" number does not mean that registration is current. Aircraft are issued a certificate of registration similar to the certificate of registration issued for highway vehicles.

Why is DMV now registering aircraft?

Aircraft registration was previously handled by the Bureau of Aeronautics in the Division of Transportation Infrastructure Development. DMV staff are registration experts, efficiently handling almost 4 million vehicle renewals annually. Aircraft registration is very similar to vehicle registration. There are 21 weight categories for registration fees, annual and biennial registration. There is a registration category of antique aircraft very similar to antique and collector motor vehicles. There are a number of aircraft types that are exempt from registration fees. Even the aircraft registration form looks very much like DMV's MV1 form.

How is aircraft registration enforced?

All aircraft using federal or state-financed airports must be registered with the FAA in order to use a publicly-financed airport. A match with DOT and FAA records is done annually to check for non-registered aircraft. Owners of unregistered aircraft are contacted by DOT. If aircraft registration fees are not paid, the FAA is contacted and a lien is placed on the aircraft listing DOT as a lienholder. This FAA lien is not removed until all fees, including late penalties, are paid to DOT. Bureau of Aeronautics staff on airport inspection trips will check for unregistered aircraft. If any unregistered aircraft are found, the owner will be sent a letter by DMV. Airport operators are also instructed to check for unregistered aircraft. As revenue from aircraft registration goes to Wisconsin airport maintenance and improvement funding, there has been very good cooperation with aircraft owners and airport operators in finding unregistered aircraft.

What is the annual volume for aircraft registration activities?

Registered aircraft as of December 31, 2008: 8,561
Renewals processed annually: 3589, based in WI
Unregistered aircraft found through FAA match: 550
Late renewal notices sent: 300

For more information contact:

Bureau of Vehicle Services
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