

New GP plates from April

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Johannesburg - Gauteng motorists will have to fork out about R400 for a set of number plates when the province introduces its new intelligent plate system in April.

The new plates will be made of aluminium, with security features such as a digital chip (called the radio frequency identification, or RFID) and a plate validation sticker - featuring the registration number and details of the vehicle - to be attached on the rear window. The validation sticker will self-destruct when removed.

"We estimate the plates to cost R60 [per plate] more than the current price ranges, but some suppliers might increase or decrease prices. It's a supply-demand issue," said Gauteng department of roads and transport spokesperson Philemon Motshwaedi.

Present plates cost about R135 per plate (excluding fitment costs), based on the quotes of a few Johannesburg suppliers.

Colour-coded new look

The letters and numbers on the plates will come in different colours, depending on whether the plate is standard (blue), personalised (green, a maximum of seven letters) or government-owned (red). Motorists will have to renew the plates every five years.

Standard plates will consist of two letters, followed by two numbers, then another two letters and GP to state the province, for instance "BB 00 BB GP".

Motshwaedi said the new system will help to counter crime, as the present system was easy to manipulate.

"Some challenges are that the current plate cannot be effectively policed, and false plates and licence discs are used to export stolen vehicles into other provinces as well as neighbouring countries," Motshwaedi said. "False plates also disguise vehicles used in crimes, including traffic violation offences."

Also, Gauteng will run out of licence numbers soon under the current system - it expects them to be exhausted by the end of October.

How to get one

Owners will have to take their cars to designated centres to verify ownership. According to a notice published earlier in the provincial gazette, vehicles with current number plates starting with B should already have reregistered before the end of January (and C before end-March, D before end-May, etc). However, Motshwaedi said these dates would be revised because of the delay in launching the new system.

Suppliers and manufacturers will be controlled to avoid cracks in the system. To become a registered supplier or manufacturer of these plates, companies need the approval of the department.

Each plate will have a plate tag which verifies the manufacturer of the blank plate and the details of the supplier. The supplier is also responsible for programming the plate tag with an authentication code.

Owners will have to inform the police should they want to have the plates re-issued, in the event of theft or loss. In the case of theft, personalised plates won't be re-issued for five years.

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