

Federal law drives up lines at DMV

BY MICHAEL GORMLEY

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ALBANY — Hold on to your MV-44 forms. Waiting in line at the Department of Motor Vehicles has just gotten worse.

New Yorkers, facing a 2020 deadline to obtain far more secure driver's licenses to comply with a federal edict to combat terrorism, are flocking to DMV offices statewide in recent months, said Columbia County Clerk Holly Tanner, speaking on behalf of the state Association of County Clerks.

"Unfortunately, it is not a simple process," Tanner said. "People have to have the right documentation and they often don't have the right documents. . . . We have to reject those people."

"There are also some people who think they might have to do this, so they are coming in off-cycle," before their licenses are due for renewal, she said. The rush, Tanner explained, has increased traffic at DMV offices 20 percent to 30 percent, according to county clerks' offices, which staff DMV offices as part of a shared services agreement.

The increased demand for license renewals began earlier this year, shortly after the New York State Department of Motor Vehicles began issuing more secure licenses last October to begin complying with the federal "Real ID" initiative.

In February, the state issued public service messages picked up by local TV, radio and other news outlets.

"If your license or nondriver ID is coming up for renewal, or you are getting one for the first time, we strongly encourage you to get a Real ID," said department Executive Deputy Commissioner Terri Egan.

Under the federal law, New Yorkers beginning Oct. 1, 2020, will need Real ID-compliant licenses to board commercial aircraft even for domestic flights, unless another acceptable document such as a passport is used. Real ID licenses will also be needed to enter military bases, federal facilities that require identification, and nuclear power plants. Public facilities run by the federal government

REAL ID



A sample Real ID-compliant New York driver's license.

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— Terri Egan, NYS DMV executive deputy commissioner

such as national parks and the Smithsonian Institution that don't require ID won't require Real ID identification.

New Yorkers aren't required to obtain a more secure license. But a standard state license that isn't Real ID-compliant will be valid only for driving. It will be stamped "Not for federal purposes."

New York now offers two licenses that comply with the federal Real ID system, each of which requires visits to the DMV. The requirements include two proofs of state residency with a street address — not a post office box — such as a utility bill, bank statement or mortgage statement; legal presence in the United States such as a passport or immigration documents, and Social Security status (for information, go to dmv.ny.gov/driver-license/federal-real-id).

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There is also a two-step process, which requires waiting in one line to submit forms and another to have a new photo taken.

A Real ID-compliant license doesn't cost more. New Yorkers may also obtain an "enhanced driver's license," which costs an extra \$30, which is also Real ID-compliant.

The enhanced driver's license is called "the golden ticket" by county clerks. It can be used instead of a passport to cross a U.S. border returning from Canada, Mexico and some Caribbean countries by land or by sea. Those countries, however, may require passports to enter their countries.

To receive an enhanced license, a New Yorker must prove state residency with two documents, U.S. citizenship (rather than just lawful residency as an immigrant), date of birth and Social Security status.

For each Real ID-compliant license, if an applicant's name has changed, a New Yorker must provide marriage certificates, divorce decrees or court orders.

In rural Columbia County, with 48,000 licensed drivers, the process has been taking about half an hour. There was no immediate comment from county clerks' offices in Nassau and Suffolk counties, where each county has more than 1 million licensed drivers.

"It's only likely to get worse as we get closer to the 2020 deadline, because they want to fly," Tanner said.

Matthew Long, left, is reunited Tuesday with Sarem Naibzada, the hit-and-run victim Long and his wife helped Friday night. ■ Watch video: newsday.com/levittown



Hit-run witness

BY RACHEL UDA

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Seven years ago, Matthew Long's brother was killed in Merrick by a hit-and-run driver who was never caught.

So on Friday, when he saw a car hit a pedestrian in front of his Levittown home and speed off, Long was especially motivated.

"I just wanted to catch him," Long, 30, said. "I wanted to look at that person in the face and ask them what they were doing."

While his wife tended to the pedestrian, Long, on his motorcycle at the time, followed the fleeing car for a few blocks as it sped through intersections. Long said he was able to get only a partial license plate number: GRF.

"I'm very grateful that I was



Long's brother, William Long, was killed in 2011 hit-and-run.

able to have these two people nearby," said the pedestrian, Sarem Naibzada, 19, who suffered bruises on his head and pain on his left side. "They were so supportive and are really trying to get this guy."

Naibzada, 19, who lives a