

From the Office of the Sheriff: “Review of Handicap Parking Rules”

Unlawful or even lawful use of handicapped parking stalls can generate heated discussions and false accusations. So let's review the rules. The WI Department of Transportation is the issuing agency for Disability Parking Identification Cards (DPIC's). These blue (permanent) or red (temporary) cards are displayed on the rearview mirror and often draw unwarranted criticism to the vehicle driver as some question the validity or necessity of the permit. The DPIC is a great program but inappropriate use and fraud taints those who use it legitimately. So, what are the rules and what are the consequences for violators?

In order to obtain a permanent (blue) DPIC, an authorized health care specialist must complete an Eligibility Certificate which states the person (1) cannot walk 200 feet or more w/o stopping to rest, (2) cannot walk w/o use of a cane, brace, crutch, prosthetic device, wheelchair, or assistance from another, (3) is restricted by lung disease or if their “arterial oxygen tension is less than 60 mm/hg on room air test”, (4) uses portable oxygen, (5) has a cardiac condition with an American Heart Association severity class of III or IV, or (6) is severely limited in ability to walk due to arthritic, neurological or orthopedic condition.

If you have a blue permanent permit it must be renewed every four years at no cost unless renewed at the DMV where there is a counter fee. Handicapped parking ID cards are valid in all 50 states and Puerto Rico. Red or temporary DPIC's have the same rules, regulations, and restrictions and are issued for a six-month period at a cost of \$6. For those applicants who received their DPIC after Sept. 1, 2006, you must keep a copy of your Eligibility Certification in your vehicle.

Disabled license plates are issued to persons who are certified by an authorized health care provider stating their disability impairs or limits the ability to walk. These plates allow the holder to park in parking spaces designated for persons with disabilities. Disabled veteran license plates are similar but issued to those who have served in any component of the U.S. Armed Forces and have a service connected disability which impairs or limits the veteran's ability to walk. The Department of Veterans Administration certification is required for such plates, renewable every four years.

Any person who sells or lends the DPIC to another can be fined \$300. Any person who fraudulently obtains, makes, alters, reproduces or duplicates one may be fined \$500. The DPIC must be hung from the interior rearview mirror when parked in a parking space reserved for persons with physical disabilities and must be removed from the mirror when the vehicle is in operation. Any person who violates handicap parking violations is fined \$214.50; this includes those who use someone else's permit for their personal use.

Law enforcement does observe violations and issues citations. Another unique enforcement tool is authorized in State Statute Chapter 349.145. This statute allows for any city, village, or county to establish a disabled parking enforcement assistance council with the majority of the council appointed by local authorities from among residents that have disabled registration or disabled parking permits. Members of the council may report and provide witness statements of disabled parking violations to authorities so uniformed traffic citations can be issued by law enforcement officers. So stay legal and thanks for listening, tnehls@co.dodge.wi.us.