

# Texas Occupational Drivers License (ODL)

If your Texas driver's license was *suspended, revoked, or denied* but you need to drive ... you may still be allowed to drive under certain circumstances if you get an occupational driver's license (ODL).

## What is an "Occupational Driver's License" or ODL?\*

An occupational driver's license (ODL) is a restricted license that lets you drive at certain times, on specific days, under certain conditions, when you have an "essential need to drive."

An "essential need" means you need to drive to:

- ✓ do your job,
- ✓ get to and from work or school, or
- ✓ do essential household duties.

## Where can I read the law?

You can read the Texas laws about Occupational Driver's Licenses and surcharges in:

- Texas Transportation Code chapter 521 subchapter L
- Texas Transportation Code chapter 601.
- Texas Health and Safety Code section 469.009.
- Texas Administrative Code, Title 7, Subtitle B, Ch. 521, Subtitle I, Ch. 708.

You can read the statutes online at: [www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us](http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us).



## Can anyone get an ODL?

No. You cannot get an ODL if:

- you lost your driving privileges because of a mental or physical disability,
- you lost your driving privileges for failure to pay child support,
- you need it to drive a commercial motor vehicle,
- the judge thinks you do not have an essential need,
- the judge is worried about public safety,
- you have received two ODLs in the past 10 years after a conviction, or
- you have a "hard suspension" waiting period due to a prior DWI arrest or conviction.

## Caution!

The process can take **weeks** to complete and can get complicated.



You may need to hire an attorney to help you reach your goal.

## Overview of Steps:

1. **Check** the status of your license to see if you really need to get an Occupational Driver's License (ODL) or if you can reinstate your license at [www.Texas.gov/driver](http://www.Texas.gov/driver).
2. **Check** to see if you qualify for an ODL.
3. **Gather the forms** and information you need to ask the Court to order DPS to issue you an ODL.
4. **File** your forms with the Clerk of the Court.
5. Go to **Court** to ask the Judge to sign the Order.
6. If the Judge signs the order, **mail** the paperwork and fees to DPS **right away**.

**See pages 3-4 for instructions...**



\*Caution: Effective September 1, 2015, if your license has been suspended due to an intoxication Offense under Penal Code 49.04 - 49.08, and you are obtaining an Occupational License:

- ♦ any vehicle you own or operate **MUST** be equipped with a working ignition interlock device in accordance with Texas Transportation Code Section 521.2465 for the entire period of the suspension (see Code of Criminal Procedure Section 13, Article 42.12); **and**
- ♦ you are not required to prove essential need and the ODL is not subject to any time of travel, reason for travel, or location of travel restrictions (see Transportation Code 521.244 (e) and 521.248 (d)).

## Step 1 Do you really need an ODL? Or can you reinstate your license?

Sometimes people think they need an Occupational Driver's License when they could just **reinstate** their license.

Before asking the court for an ODL, check your license eligibility status at:

[www.Texas.gov/driver](http://www.Texas.gov/driver)

Click on "Drivers License Reinstatement and Status."

This free site will tell you if you can drive with your current license and, if not, what you need to do to become eligible. If you are not eligible, the website will tell you:

1. The requirements to meet.
2. The fees you need to pay.
3. About surcharge waiver programs.

You can pay fees on this website and get information on how to mail proof that you met the compliance requirements to DPS. Keep checking the website because it is updated daily.

You can also call the  
Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS)  
to check your eligibility/qualifying status:  
512-424-2600 (English)  
512-424-7181 (Español)



Be careful! Recent court actions, out-of-state violations, and AG-reported child support arrearages may not be reflected in your current eligibility status.

## Step 2 Do you qualify for an ODL?

Even if you get a court order for an Occupational Driver's License, DPS cannot issue one if:

- \* You lost your driving privileges for a medical condition.
- \* You lost your driving privileges because you owe child support.
- \* You have received two ODLs after a conviction in the past 10 years.
- \* You don't qualify to get a Texas driver's license because you are in the United States unlawfully. The documents to verify that you are a citizen or that you are in the United States lawfully are listed at:

[www.txdps.state.tx.us/DriverLicense/ApplyforLicense.htm](http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/DriverLicense/ApplyforLicense.htm)

## Step 3 Gather your paperwork

✓ Two court forms:

- 1) The *Petition for Occupational Driver's License* asks the Court to issue an order.
- 2) The *Order for Occupational Driver's License* orders DPS to issue you an ODL.

Print the court forms at [www.TexasLawHelp.org](http://www.TexasLawHelp.org). You can also use the interactive forms interview on TexasLawHelp. With this program, you answer questions about your need to drive, etc. Then you print out the prefilled-in forms.

✓ Certified Abstract (Type AR) of your driving record from DPS: Get your Type AR Certified Abstract:

\*By mail with form DR-36 (takes 3-4 weeks, costs \$20) or  
\*Online (quickly, cost \$22 & must have audit number) at  
<http://www.dps.texas.gov/DriverLicense/driverrecords.htm>.

✓ Proof that you need to drive to go to work, school, or perform essential household duties, etc.  
Examples of proof: your school schedule or registration, a current pay stub, a letter from your job, or an affidavit (sworn statement) explaining your need to drive.

✓ SR-22 proof of insurance from your insurance company: Get the SR-22 (also called a "Financial Responsibility Certificate") from your insurance company. The SR-22 proves that you have the minimum liability insurance required by law. If you don't own a vehicle, you can get a Texas Non-Owner SR-22 Insurance Policy. Your insurance company will tell DPS if the SR-22 coverage lapses, terminates or is cancelled—and then your ODL will be revoked.