

**CHARLES G. MOORE**  
Motor Vehicle  
Commissioner



# *keeping track of them all*

## **MOTOR VEHICLE DEPARTMENT**

At the end of the 1957-58 fiscal year, there were 208,195 licensed drivers in Delaware, operating 171,122 registered motor vehicles. The Motor Vehicle Department is responsible for seeing that the drivers are qualified initially, following up on them during their driving career, titling and registering motor vehicles, and annually inspecting them to ensure their safe operating condition. The Department also administers the Driver Safety Responsibility Law.

The first major change in the design of Delaware license plates since the permanent plate system was adopted in 1941 was made this year. Replacing the old black and white will be a completely reflectorized plate on an aluminum base. Gold numbers and the word "Delaware" at the top stand out brilliantly against the blue background, both day and night. The new plate also conforms to the standard 12 inch by 6 inch size now being adopted throughout the country.

Starting January 1, 1958, the Department began mailing notices to motor vehicle owners about three months before their registrations were due to expire. This has proved both a convenience to the individual and a help to the department by cutting down considerably on the "last minute rush" that previously marked the ends of each registration period.

## **DRIVER IMPROVEMENT**

To deal with licensed drivers who cannot or will not behave safely, the law provides for suspension of their licenses by the Motor Vehicle Department, under certain circumstances. This responsibility is handled by the Driver Improvement Bureau. This year, the bureau handled a record 7,765 cases, resulting in 2,566 suspensions and 3,389 warning letters, a substantial increase over the previous year. To keep abreast of the latest techniques in handling the problem driver, the director of the bureau attended a three-week course at Northwestern University during the year.



Number One for The First Citizen

Governor J. Caleb Boggs receives Number 1 license plate for his official automobile from J. Gordon Smith, Chairman. Chief Engineer Richard A. Haber looks on.

The present law presumes the work of the courts will be enough to deter all but the most serious or habitual violator. The bureau's efforts, therefore, are directed toward the latter—drivers who have committed one of the more serious traffic offenses, or have been involved in several accidents, or who continue to violate traffic laws in spite of courts penalties. While tremendous strides have been made since the driver improvement law was adopted, suspension of operating privileges is the only action the bureau can take against the habitually unsafe or careless driver. There is a need for legislation to put additional teeth in the law if further significant progress is to be made in driver improvement.

### **SAFETY RESPONSIBILITY**

The Delaware Safety Responsibility Law provides for suspension of drivers' licenses and registrations after an accident if they are not insured and cannot show ability to meet the damages resulting from the accident. This law is administered by the Safety Responsibility Division.

A noteworthy trend during the year was the decrease in the number of uninsured motorists who were involved in the 7,772 accidents reported. However, property damage continued to climb, and almost one third of the accidents still involve at least one driver without insurance.

The division suspended 1,474 licenses during the year. For the first time, warrants were issued for the arrest of persons who were notified of suspensions and who failed to return their licenses, registrations, etc. to the Motor Vehicle Department. Forty arrests were made, and fines for the offense ranged from \$25 to \$100.

The cooperation of the police departments throughout the state, far above the minimum requirements of duty, have been of major help to the division in carrying out its responsibilities.

For the future, the need to keep Delaware's Safety Responsibility program abreast of the times should receive continuing attention, and thought should be given to legislation that may be necessary to accomplish this.



New data processing machines operate to make the functions of the Department more efficient.