

Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

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Responses to Information Requests

Responses to Information Requests (RIR) respond to focused Requests for Information that are submitted to the Research Directorate in the course of the refugee protection determination process. The database contains a seven-year archive of English and French RIRs. Earlier RIRs may be found on the UNHCR's [Refworld](#) website.

3 April 2013

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Colombia: Driver's licences, including format and process to obtain one; renewal process, including whether it can be done outside the country

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

1. Driver's Licences, Overview

During a 20 March 2013 telephone interview with the Research Directorate, an official at the Embassy of Colombia in Ottawa indicated that there is a driver's licence authorizing an individual to drive a personal vehicle and a driver's licence for driving a public transit vehicle (Colombia 20 Mar. 2013).

El Tiempo reports that the government started issuing new driver's licences in 2009 (18 June 2011). According to the embassy official, new driver's licences for personal vehicles contain the same information as the previous ones (Colombia 21 Mar. 2013). The official noted that it is not a requirement to obtain a new driver's licence (*ibid.* 20 Mar. 2013). All licences are still valid and can be used (*ibid.*). *El Tiempo* also notes that all formats of driver's licences [translation] "should be accepted" (18 June 2011). The website of the Ministry of Transportation indicates that the driver's licence for public transit vehicles can also be used for driving a private vehicle (Colombia n.d.). The official noted that the public-transit-vehicle licence can be used for driving a personal vehicle even if it has expired (*ibid.* 20 Mar. 2013). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

The embassy official noted that a driver's licence for private vehicles displays the following information: individual's photograph; full name; Colombian ID number (*cédula de ciudadanía*); restrictions; date of issue; blood type and the category of the driver's licence (*ibid.*). The driver's licences for public transit vehicles display the same information, but also include an expiry date (*ibid.*).

Sources indicate that driver's licences for personal vehicles are valid indefinitely (Medellin 19 Mar. 2013; Colombia 20 Mar. 2013; *ibid.* n.d.). However, the website of the Ministry of Transportation indicates that the holder has to undergo a professional medical exam every six years to prove his or her mental and physical suitability to drive a personal vehicle (*ibid.*). The driver's licences for public transit vehicles have an expiry date, which varies depending on the category of the licence (*ibid.* 20 Mar. 2013). According to the website of the Ministry of Transportation, the driver's licences for public transit vehicles are renewable every three years (*ibid.* n.d.).

2. Obtaining a Driver's Licence

The official at the embassy stated that the requirements and procedures to obtain a driver's licence in Colombia are the same across the country (*ibid.* 20 Mar. 2013). During a 19 March 2013 telephone interview with the Research Directorate, a representative of the Secretariat of Transportation and Traffic of Medellín indicated that the procedures and requirements [translation] "do not vary much" throughout the country, but there is no guarantee that they are the same (Medellin 19 Mar. 2013). The representative added that additional documents might be required when applying for a driver's licence in other departments of the country; it might also depend on the category of a licence (*ibid.*).

Two sources indicated that a driver's licence can be obtained only in person (*ibid.*; Colombia 20 Mar. 2013). The representative of the Secretariat of Transportation and Traffic of Medellín explained that it has to be done in person because an individual has to be fingerprinted and his or her photograph has to be taken (Medellin 19 Mar. 2013). According to the embassy official, the driver's licence cannot be obtained or renewed through an embassy (Colombia 20 Mar. 2013). The official added that an individual cannot obtain a driver's licence through a representative (*ibid.*).

The website of the Ministry of Transportation states that an individual must meet the following requirements in order to obtain a driver's licence for a personal vehicle:

- be able to read and write;
- be 16 years of age;
- pass a theoretical and practical exam or present a driving aptitude certificate obtained from a driving school recognized by the Ministry of Transportation;
- present a physical and mental health certificate issued by a doctor recognized by the Health Ministry (ibid. n.d.).

According to the website of the Ministry of Transportation, in order to obtain a driver's licence for a public transit vehicle, an individual must be 18 years of age and must pass a theoretical and practical exam, as well as the medical exams appropriate to driving a public transit vehicle (ibid.). The website indicates that the driver's licences are issued by the departmental, local or municipal organizations designated by the Ministry of Transportation (ibid.).

3. Obtaining a Duplicate of a Driver's Licence

The website of the Ministry of Transportation lists the following requirements for obtaining a duplicate a driver's licences:

- ability to read and write;
- an application form;
- a fee;
- individual's photograph;
- proof of individual's blood type;
- a copy of identification (cédula de ciudadanía);
- physical and mental health certificates; and
- original driver's licence (if damaged) (ibid.).

If an individual lost his or her driver's licence and would like to replace it, he or she must submit, along with all the required documents, a police report confirming that the document was lost (ibid.).

4. Renewal of a Driver's Licence for a Public Transit Vehicle

In order to renew a driver's licence for a public transit vehicle, an individual must present a physical and mental health certificate from a medical professional registered with the Ministry of Health (ibid.). Drivers over 65 years of age need to renew their licences for driving public transit vehicles on a yearly basis, by proving their competency to drive a vehicle (ibid.). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

Colombia. 21 March 2013. Embassy of Colombia, Ottawa. Telephone interview with an official.

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_____. N.d. Ministerio de Transporte. "Preguntas Frecuentes." <<https://www.mintransporte.gov.co/loader.php?IServicio=FAQ&IFuncion=viewPreguntas&id=77>> [Accessed 19 Mar. 2013]

El Tiempo. 18 June 2011. Jorge Quintero. "Los colombianos aún no deben cambiar de licencia de conducción." <http://www.eltiempo.com/colombia/bogota/ARTICULO-WEB-NEW_NOTA_INTERIOR-9663544.html> [Accessed 26 Mar. 2013]

Medellin. 19 March 2013. Secretaría de Transportes y Tránsito de Medellín. Telephone interview with a representative.

Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: Attempts to contact the following were unsuccessful: Colombia – Ministerio de Transporte, Ministerio de Transporte de Valle del Cauca, Servicio de Transito Cali.

Internet sites, including: Amnesty International; Caracol; Colombia – Alcaldía de Santiago de Cali, Centro de Diagnóstico Automotor del Valle, Consulate of Colombia in Sidney, Gobierno en línea, Portal de la Ciudad de Bogota, Portal de la Ciudad de Medellín, Secretaría de Tránsito y Transporte Municipal de Santiago de Cali, Servicios de tránsito de Cali; *El Espectador*; *El Mundo*; *El País*; *El Universal*; Escuela de Conducción; Factiva; Human Rights Watch; Keesing Reference Systems; United Nations – Refworld.

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