Paper License fact sheet

Why did we make the changes? For several years, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) Licensing Bureau and Technology Services Division (TSD) staff have been engaged in discussions related to concerns of paper supply and quality, along with difficulties procuring replacement equipment and the limitations of our current Automated Licensing System (ALS). In order to avoid catastrophic failure of equipment and/or ALS, the Director's Office asked Licensing, TSD, Enforcement, and Communications & Education staff to formulate an immediate solution to mitigate these potential issues prior to the rollout of ExploreMT (the replacement for ALS). Any significant changes needed to take place prior to the beginning of the license year on March 1, 2020.

Why regular paper?

- Added convenience to allow our online customers to print carcass tags at home at the conclusion of their purchase, rather than wait for them to arrive in the mail.
- Aging technology: the point of sale printers were outdated and difficult to replace.
  - Fundamental coding in ALS allows for a single printer driver that must be used at all 300 license agents. Combinations of different printer types across license agents cannot be accommodated using our current system.
  - Existing thermal printers required use at the hottest setting in order to burn through the waterproof coating on the thermal paper. This significantly reduced the usable life of the printer.
- To consolidate to one paper type. FWP was using several different types of waterproof license paper stock for printing:
  - Fulfillment stock (daily online sales)
  - Nonresident Combination and Drawings stock
  - Single stock (permits)
  - Thermal rolls (over the counter sales)
- Laser printers for 8½ x 11" paper are easily procured in large quantities and replaceable.

Thermal paper issues

- Waterproof coating proves difficult to burn through using existing thermal printers.
- Yellow-colored topcoat bleeds on animal carcasses when exposed to fluids. This also happened in Idaho.
- In 2019, many FWP customers experienced the text fading on licenses. This was a paper manufacturer error that also affected other states. The same thing occurred in other states in 2018 and 2020.
- Paper warped easily.
- The heat from the printer often interacted poorly with the waterproof coating, causing sheets to stick to one another, resulting in excessive printer malfunction.
- There have been paper sizing issues dating back to 2012. For example, entire shipments of thermal rolls where incorrectly cut too small/large and would not work in the thermal printers. Thousands of rolls needed to be returned and replaced causing major delays.

License fraud mitigation

- The link emailed to the customer at the conclusion of the transaction is only available once and then cannot be accessed again. If the link is not redeemed within five days, the customer is automatically mailed their carcass tag and the link is no longer valid.

Other states

Other states including Alaska, Arkansas, Delaware, Maine, and Ohio, use 8½ x 11" white paper for licenses and carcass tags. Additional states use hybrid options of regular paper for licenses and digital carcass tags.