

CHECKLIST · ALABAMA

Moving to Alabama Checklist: The First 30 Days (2026)

The shutoff rule fires only in the cold, there is no such document as a marriage license, and a birth certificate can be collected from any county health department.

SHORT ANSWER

We start this list with four warnings, because all four break a habit brought from another state. First: **the shutoff rule exists, but only in the cold.** The regulator's rule names **32 degrees Fahrenheit and below; no heat threshold was found**, so we cannot show you any summer protection against an air conditioning shutoff. Second: **there is no such document as a marriage license**; since 2019 the courts have issued none. Third: **a birth certificate can be collected from any county health department** and most are issued while you wait. Fourth: **this state has an income tax**, so the sentence there is no tax here cannot be written anywhere.

Deadlines: we separate the certain from the unverified

TASK	PERIOD	WHERE
Federal address report	10 days. Moving within the state also requires a report	Through your online account or Form AR-11
Notice to the court	5 days if you have a pending case	Form EOIR-33/IC. There is no immigration court in this state , so the hearing is elsewhere
Driver license	30 days after establishing residence in the state	A state office. County counters do not handle foreign national transactions
Driver license, arriving directly from abroad	The period could not be verified. The thirty-day requirement is tied to establishing residence	Ask the office in writing and keep the answer
Vehicle registration, moving to the state	30 days from the date the vehicle entered the state	County licensing counter; insurance written for Alabama first
Vehicle registration, buying a car	20 calendar days	Same counter; late penalty 15 dollars plus interest
License address change within the state	30 days , free, no new card printed	The agency's own channel

Three lines in that table mislead readers often. First: **a change of address at the post office does not satisfy the federal report**, and filing the federal report **does not automatically update the address on a pending**

case; do both, and enter the receipt number of every pending application, uscis.gov/addresschange. Second: **giving your address to a state or county agency does not satisfy the federal duty**; nothing you say from the license office to the school registrar takes its place. Third, and specific to this state: **there is no immigration court here**, so **only the notice you are sent** tells you where your hearing is; if the address is wrong, that notice goes to the old one. One more thing changed in 2026: account for the federal rule that **took effect on June 29, 2026** and reworked alien registration and what counts as evidence of registration, text at federalregister.gov.

The first thirty days

TASK	WHERE OR HOW
☐ File the federal address report within 10 days	uscis.gov/addresschange ; update the address on your pending case separately, and if you have a court case, EOIR-33/IC within 5 days
☐ Find out which county you are in and write the name down	In this state the tax district, the yearly vehicle value tax, the registration office, shelter lists and weather warnings all follow the county . Some cities spread across more than one, so the city name on your envelope does not tell you your county
☐ Pick the right door for the license	Foreign national transactions are handled at none of the 124 county counters of the local type ; they are handled at most state offices, not all. Do not decide from the office name , confirm the type, and ask about issuance and renewal separately by telephone
☐ With no number, request the non-eligibility letter	At the license counter the agency's own list accepts that letter. It is a separate appointment and a separate wait ; put the second line on your calendar
☐ Find out what type your provider is	A private company, a municipal utility or a cooperative. Whether the shutoff rule reaches you, and whether you have a state-level complaint route, depends on it
☐ Ask the right question when opening an account	Do not say I have no number . Ask this: what do you accept as alternative identification, are a passport and an individual taxpayer identification number on the list, and does applying in person change anything . Ask for the answer in writing
☐ Find out which account trash sits on	In some places it starts automatically with the water account, in others it is a separate company and a separate bill, and in others the deposit sits with a water board while the truck belongs to the city
☐ Start insurance before registering the car	The policy must be written for Alabama ; an out-of-state policy will not register the car, and insurance is a prerequisite to registration
☐ If you have children, open the school enrollment at once	The real barrier is not the number, it is address proof . A lease or deed plus a current bill, and they may require it to be in your name
☐ If you need a birth certificate, go to the nearest county health department	There is one statewide register ; the certificate can be collected from any county and most are issued while you wait . For a reader in a small town this is a structural convenience

TASK	WHERE OR HOW
☐ Keep your deposit receipt and your move-out date	The cap is one month's rent ; return within 60 days or an itemized accounting. If the landlord misses it, they owe twice the deposit , but you must have left a written forwarding address
☐ Turn on weather alerts the week you arrive	Not in March. There are two severe weather seasons and the second runs from early November to mid-December
☐ Redo your take-home pay calculation	This state has an income tax and the top bracket begins at a very low threshold. Some cities also withhold a local occupational fee

THE SHUTOFF RULE: COLD ONLY, AND READ ALL FIVE LIMITS TOGETHER

- **The rule itself:** residential electric or natural gas service may not be disconnected for nonpayment when the forecast temperature at that address for that calendar day will be **32 degrees Fahrenheit or below**. The governing forecast is **the national weather service** forecast for that location.
- **The scope is electricity and natural gas only. Water, sewer and trash sit outside this rule.**
- **No heat trigger was found.** We do not write that there is none; we write that we could not find one, and we do not describe a protection we could not find as though it exists. **If losing air conditioning is a health risk for you, tell the utility in advance:** the rule's special circumstances provision requires every utility to carry a tariff provision on this.
- **Municipal utilities and cooperatives sit outside the scope.** The regulator writes on its own page that it **does not regulate electric cooperatives, most water companies and municipal utilities** and that it **has no authority to resolve complaints about them**. If your provider is one of these, **the rule may not operate at your address** and you have no state-level complaint route.
- **Two regimes can exist in the same city.** Most of a city may buy power from a regulated company while some areas buy from **a cooperative. Find out your provider's name and type.**
- **The source's own effective date is very old** and whether the rule was later amended could not be verified; so we give the rule by name but **we do not claim it applies unchanged today.**

SIX MORE THINGS IN THAT SAME RULE THAT WILL HELP YOU

- **A right to installments:** every utility must give **at least one employee in each of its offices** authority to extend payment time, arrange installments and correct billing errors. **If a month is coming that you cannot cover, do not wait for a disconnection notice, call.**
- **Notice period:** a mailed disconnection notice must be sent **at least five calendar days** before the disconnection.
- **Form of the notice:** it must carry a **bold heading** and must tell the customer to go to the utility first and to the regulator if the matter is not resolved.
- **Time limit:** service may not be disconnected for nonpayment **after 3:30 p.m.** on the day immediately before a day the utility's office will be closed.
- **Payment up to the last moment:** the customer may pay **until service is actually cut.**
- **Deposits:** at regulated electric and gas utilities a deposit **may not exceed the estimated bill for two ordinary billing periods**, carries **7 percent annual interest** credited on the December bill, and for a residential customer in good standing may not be held beyond **the December following 24 months. These rules do not bind municipal utilities or cooperatives.**

WATER, SEWER AND TRASH: A SEPARATE REGIME AND A SEPARATE COUNTERPART

- These three sit **outside the shutoff rule** and largely **outside the state regulator** as well. The practical consequence is blunt: **a reader whose water is cut has no state body to go to**; the counterpart is the city or the water board directly, and the last resort is the elected city council.
- **There are three structures and no two are alike**: a direct **city department**; a separately incorporated **water board**; and a **municipally owned multi-service utility** that bills electricity, gas and water together.
- **One exception should not be confused**: a municipal utility that supplies all three may apply **its own internal policy** to all three, and may even defer disconnection in both low and high temperatures. **But that is not a state rule**, it is that utility's own policy and no outside body binds it.
- **That policy carries two limits**: a service already disconnected is **not restored** because of weather; and a disconnection deferred for weather goes ahead when conditions improve, **with no further notice sent**.
- **We publish no tariff figures**. The water, sewer and trash tariffs and deposits of the settlements read could not be verified; get your own city's rate from the utility's own page or by telephone.
- **If you rent, ask this too**: some utilities require service to be opened in the name of **the lawful occupant of the property** and may refuse to open an account in another name at an address where someone owes a balance.

MARRIAGE: THERE IS NO LICENSE, AND THE 30-DAY RULE IS STRICT

- **Since August 29, 2019** probate courts have issued no marriage license. The new flow: the couple completes the state health agency's **marriage certificate form**, signs it **before an Alabama notary public**, delivers it to **any county's** probate court, and the marriage is valid the moment the court records it. **Do not say marriage license and do not search for that name**; some county page titles still carry the old word even though their content says the license no longer exists.
- **A ceremony is not required.** The agency's answer: a ceremony is optional. **Research found no separate witness requirement**; what every source requires is notarization, so the notary performs the witnessing function. **We do not write that no witness is required.**
- **The notary must be an Alabama notary**, and **a form notarized by a notarizing official within the U.S. Department of State is not accepted.** So **you cannot have the form notarized at a consulate abroad and mail it in.** Courts do not provide notary service either, and **electronic signatures are not accepted.**
- **The 30-day rule is about arrival, not mailing:** the form must **reach the court within 30 days** of the later of the two signature dates. **A postmark is not the filing date**, e-mail is not accepted, and if the period is missed **the marriage is void** and you start over.
- **For an applicant with no number, the clearest published answer in the series is here:** the agency states in writing that **a person who has never been issued a Social Security number should leave that field blank.** A resident of a foreign country writes the country's state, province or region in the county of residence field and **the name of the country** in the state of residence field. **That answer says nothing about immigration status** and we do not add that sentence.
- **The biggest gap in this item:** identity checking moved from the courthouse counter to **the notary's desk**, and **no published agency or county rule was found on which identity documents a notary must accept for this form. Do not assume. Call the notary** and ask by naming the document: do you notarize with a Turkish passport.
- **Fees vary by county and the form can be recorded in any county**, so this is the one item here you can shop for. Three verified counties: **75 dollars, 86 dollars and 89 dollars. Other counties' fees could not be verified and we do not publish them.** None of the three pages carries a date, so we attach the agency's own instruction to every figure: **call the court first.**

VITAL RECORDS: AN OPEN DOOR FOR A READER WITH NO NUMBER

- There is **one statewide register**, and the agency's own sentence is this: to obtain a certified copy of an Alabama birth certificate you may go to **any county health department in the state**, and **most birth certificates can be issued while you wait**.
- **On the identification list, a U.S. or foreign passport is a primary document** and is sufficient on its own. **A Social Security number appears nowhere on either list** and **the card is expressly not accepted**; only agency correspondence counts, and only as a secondary document.
- **A trap**: a primary document may be expired by **no more than 60 days**. For a newcomer whose passport is awaiting renewal that is a real obstacle.
- **An asymmetry, read the two lines in the same paragraph: the marriage record is unrestricted** and no identification is asked of the person requesting a copy; **a birth certificate is restricted for 125 years** and identification is required. So a person with no acceptable identification can obtain a copy of a marriage certificate but not a newly issued birth certificate.
- **And an exit, in the agency's own words**: in **special circumstances** where an applicant can present none of these documents, the agency directs the reader to call the center for health statistics. **That is not an invented route**, it is the agency's own.
- **Fees**: a birth or marriage record search is **15 dollars** and includes one certified copy; additional copies requested at the same time are **6 dollars** each, and expediting adds **15 dollars**. **Ordering online costs more than the counter** and the agency says so itself.

TAX: THE SENTENCE THERE IS NO TAX CANNOT BE WRITTEN IN THIS STATE

- **There is a state income tax.** For a single filer, **2 percent** on the first 500 dollars, **4 percent** on the next 2,500, and **5 percent** on all taxable income above 3,000 dollars. Married filing jointly, the thresholds are **1,000** and **6,000** dollars. **The line to read is where the top bracket begins:** the threshold is low, so a full-time worker who has just arrived is in the top bracket for most of their income.
- **The domicile rule touches a reader with income from Türkiye directly:** the revenue agency's own sentence is that a person domiciled in the state is taxed on **all income regardless of whether it was earned inside or outside Alabama**, and it adds: **the burden of proving a change of domicile is on the taxpayer.**
- **Sales tax follows the address, not even the city.** The state share is **4 percent** on general sales and **2 percent** on food. But **although the state cut its food rate, local shares did not come down on food:** in every settlement measured, city and county shares apply to food at the general rate. **The rate you see at the register is not the state rate.** Read your own rate from [the revenue agency's local rate file](#).
- **A local occupational tax does not exist everywhere, but where it does it comes out of your pay,** and the test is **not residence but where the work is performed.** It was verified in only one of five settlements this round; **we do not write that there is none elsewhere**, so ask your employer whether payroll carries a local deduction.
- **And the finding that reaches the reader's pocket:** that city's **individual return form has no identification number field at all**, while **the refund form asks for a Social Security number** and the instruction is explicit: the form is not processed unless every section is completed. So the fee is withheld, the route to getting it back asks for a number, and **research found no alternative on any form.** We do not write that a refund cannot be obtained; we write that **no route was found in the published forms**, and that the question belongs to the city's revenue office.
- **One more trap:** the state return instructions say that **local, city or occupational tax** cannot be claimed as Alabama income tax withheld.
- **And the unresolved item:** the word ITIN **does not appear anywhere** in the revenue agency's own return instructions, nor in the employer withholding booklet. **We do not write that Alabama does not accept an ITIN;** we write that research found no instruction about an ITIN in the guide. Ask a tax adviser before you start work and get the answer in writing.

RENTING: PROTECTED CLASSES, A NARROW RETALIATION BAN AND A SAFETY ITEM

- **The state fair housing section protects national origin** and for a Turkish reader that is the real hook. The protected grounds are race, color, religion, sex, familial status and **national origin**. **Source of income and immigration status are not on the list**. **Disability is not named in this section**; housing disability protection comes from **the federal fair housing act** and the two are separate bodies of law.
- **A retaliation ban exists but it is narrow**: only three situations. The tenant complained of a building or housing code violation to **a public agency**; the tenant complained to **the landlord** of a violation of a particular section; or the tenant **joined or organized a tenants' union**. **The three are listed, and not generalized into tenants are protected**.
- **The deposit cap is one month's rent** (pets, alterations to the property and increased liability risks excepted), return within **60 days**, and the penalty for missing it is **double**. The tenant must leave a **written forwarding address** on moving out; **a deposit unclaimed for 90 days is treated as forfeited**.
- **If rent is unpaid the eviction notice is short**: the lease ends **at least seven business days** after the written termination notice, and **if payment is made within those seven business days the termination does not occur**. But one situation cannot be cured: **knowing material misrepresentation in the lease or in the rental application**. **Do not sign a form you do not understand**.
- **And the provision permanently stopped but still printed in the code**: the 2011 act's **ban on renting housing to a person unlawfully present was permanently enjoined by a federal court** (the same order, entered November 25, 2013), **but the text sits in the code with no warning**. If a landlord shows you that text, know this, and **talk to a lawyer about your own situation**.
- **A source caution**: the deposit, eviction and notice periods were read **from a secondary source and from a snapshot dated December 30, 2024**, so 2025 and 2026 changes may not appear in those figures.
- **And a safety item: for manufactured and mobile homes the official advice is not to shelter inside but to leave before the storm arrives**. If you are considering a cheap mobile home rental, that is a **material** part of the decision. **We publish no risk ratio**; none could be verified from any agency page. If you are renting an apartment or a house, **ask before you sign**: does this building have a designated shelter area and where is it.

SEVERE WEATHER: TWO SEASONS, THE COUNTY NAME AND THE WATCH MOMENT

- **There are two seasons and a newcomer does not know the second.** The weather service's regional office writes that the primary season is **spring** but that there is **a secondary season running from early November to mid-December**. A reader who arrives in September having heard that tornado season is in spring **enters November unprepared**.
- **Warnings are issued by county.** A tornado warning is usually for part of one or two counties and for less than an hour, so the text may name **your county** rather than your city. The same office writes in its own capitals: **know where you live**. There are three concrete reasons to know your county: **warning texts go out by county name, shelter lists are published by county, and emergency management differs by county**.
- **The moment to go to a shelter is the watch, not the warning.** A county emergency management agency writes it plainly: community shelters generally open **during a watch**, and the time to go is **during the watch before conditions deteriorate, not when a warning is issued for the area**. The same agency adds that **traveling during a warning is dangerous and is not recommended**.
- **Community shelters do not exist everywhere.** One county agency writes in its own heading that **it operates no community safe room**; another says **there are no public safe rooms in the two large cities in its area**. Some counties publish full lists with capacity and access. **In other counties no published list could be found; we do not write that there is none**.
- **A name trap:** a page titled **emergency shelters** on one city's site is not a storm shelter list, it is a **homelessness services directory**. For storm shelters look to **the county emergency management agency**.
- **Wireless emergency alerts need no registration** and reach compatible phones automatically; if you enter the threat area after an alert is sent, the message reaches you on entry. **The language of the emergency alert follows the device's language setting and no Turkish example could be found**.



TURKISH-SPEAKING IMMIGRATION ATTORNEY IN ALABAMA

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