

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE · IRVINE

Irvine Car Registration, Smog Check and The Toll Roads Guide 2026

For cars brought from another state, cars bought in California, and the toll roads around Irvine (SR-73, 133, 241, 261 and the I-405 Express Lanes).

SHORT ANSWER

New residents in Irvine have 20 days to pay California registration fees to the DMV. Unlike Texas, there is no separate county tax office; everything runs through the DMV. The order is: California insurance (at least \$30,000/\$60,000/\$15,000), a smog check for most gas vehicles, then a REG 343 application and documents at DMV. Irvine sits in the middle of The Toll Roads network (SR-73, 133, 241 and 261): there are no cash lanes, and without an account you must pay online within 5 days before or after the trip. Miss the window and a \$57.50 penalty is added to the toll.

Step by step

- 1 **Get California insurance.** Minimum liability: \$30,000 per person, \$60,000 per accident, \$15,000 property damage (for policies issued or renewed on or after January 1, 2025).
- 2 **Get a smog check if required.** Required for most gasoline vehicles model year 1976 and newer (motorcycles exempt) and for diesel vehicles 1998 and newer under 14,001 lb. The certificate is valid for 90 days after the test.
- 3 **Complete Form REG 343.** All owners must sign.
- 4 **Gather your documents.** Your previous state's title (or a California card marked "Nontransferable"), your previous state's last registration or renewal notice, and a REG 31 Verification of Vehicle completed by a DMV employee, a law enforcement officer, or a licensed vehicle verifier.
- 5 **Submit everything and pay within 20 days.** File on time even if the title or smog certificate is still pending, to avoid a penalty.

California has no separate county tax office the way Texas does; your driver's license and vehicle registration both go through the DMV, just as two separate transactions. Irvine has no DMV field office, so book the appointment at a nearby office such as Santa Ana or Costa Mesa (office list in the driver's license guide).

What to bring to the DMV

DOCUMENT	NOTES
☐ Identification	Valid photo ID.

DOCUMENT	NOTES
☐ Previous title and last registration	If you do not have the title, the California registration card may be marked "Nontransferable."
☐ REG 343	Completed and signed by all owners.
☐ Proof of insurance	At least \$30,000/\$60,000/\$15,000.
☐ Smog certificate	For vehicles that require it; valid 90 days after the test.
☐ REG 31 Verification of Vehicle	Completed by a DMV employee, law enforcement, or a licensed verifier.

Fees (2026)

ITEM	AMOUNT
Registration base fee (includes alternative fuel/technology fee)	about \$76
Vehicle License Fee	0.65% of vehicle value
CHP fee	\$34 (standard) / \$56 (commercial vehicles under CVRA)
Transportation Improvement Fee	\$33 to \$231 by vehicle value
Smog abatement fee (where applicable)	\$20
Late penalty	starts around \$10 for 1 to 10 days late, rising past \$100 after two years

See the full breakdown on [DMV's registration fees page](#).

Irvine toll roads: The Toll Roads and FasTrak

Irvine is at the heart of [The Toll Roads](#) network (SR-73, SR-133, SR-241 and SR-261), operated by the Transportation Corridor Agencies (TCA). There are no cash lanes; every toll is electronic. The biggest trap is the payment window: without an account, you have 5 days before or after your trip to pay online or in the app, and it can take up to 48 hours for a trip to post.

TOPIC	DETAILS
Account types	Prepaid (no fee, earns discounts), Charge (no fee, no discount), Invoice (\$2 a month). With no account, pay online within the 5-day window.
Penalties	A toll not paid within the window costs \$57.50 plus the toll; a second notice adds \$42.50. Nonpayment can lead to a DMV registration hold; a payment plan is possible.
Rate examples (July 1, 2026 rate card)	Rates depend on the toll point and time of day. Weekday off-peak examples, account / non-account: Irvine Ranch mainline \$2.91 / \$3.60; Windy Ridge mainline \$4.21 / \$4.76; Catalina View mainline \$7.46 / \$9.74. A Prepaid account that accumulates \$40 in tolls in a statement period gets \$1 off every toll the next period. Current rates: the rate card on The Toll Roads website .

TOPIC	DETAILS
Irvine walk-in center	125 Pacifica, Irvine, CA 92618 · Mon-Fri 7:30am-5:30pm
Call center	(949) 727-4800 · Mon-Fri 8am-6pm, Sat 9am-2pm
Rental cars	Pay tolls online within 5 days, or add the plate to your account with the rental dates; rental companies may add service fees.
I-405 Express Lanes (OCTA)	A FasTrak transponder is required; an existing California toll agency transponder or account works. Customer service 562-740-4405.

NOTE FOR IMMIGRANTS

Toll notices go to the address on your vehicle registration, so update your registration address, and your account if you have one, after you move; otherwise you may not see a penalty notice. If you are subject to the address-reporting requirement, you must also report your new address to USCIS within 10 days (AR-11).

Bringing a car from out of state or from abroad

If you are importing a car from abroad, federal paperwork applies in addition to the DMV process above: a customs entry form (CBP Form 7501) and a DOT Form HS-7. If you are simply moving from another U.S. state, the REG 343 process above is what you need. California restricts registering a vehicle less than 2 years old with less than 7,500 miles unless it meets California emissions standards; see exemption Form REG 256F.



TURKISH-SPEAKING IMMIGRATION ATTORNEY IN IRVINE

Have a question about your immigration status?

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