

§ 1-105. Service upon nonresident drivers of motor vehicles and upon the personal representatives of deceased nonresident drivers of motor vehicles.

(a) The acceptance by a nonresident of the rights and privileges conferred by the laws now or hereafter in force in this State permitting the operation of motor vehicles, as evidenced by the operation of a motor vehicle by the nonresident on the public highways of this State, or at any other place in this State, or the operation by the nonresident of a motor vehicle on the public highways of this State or at any other place in this State, other than as so permitted or regulated, shall be deemed equivalent to the appointment by the nonresident of the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles, or the Commissioner's successor in office, to be the nonresident's true and lawful attorney and the attorney of the nonresident's executor or Administrator, upon whom may be served all summonses or other lawful process in any action or proceeding against the nonresident or the nonresident's executor or administrator, growing out of any accident or collision in which the nonresident may be involved by reason of the operation by the nonresident, for the nonresident, or under the nonresident's control or direction, express or implied, of a motor vehicle on the public highways of this State, or at any other place in this State, and said acceptance or operation shall be a signification of the nonresident's agreement that any such process against the nonresident or the nonresident's executor or administrator shall be of the same legal force and validity as if served on the nonresident personally, or on the nonresident's executor or administrator.

Service of such process shall be made in the following manner:

- (1) By leaving a copy thereof, with a fee of twenty dollars (\$20.00) in the hands of the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles, or in the Commissioner's office. Such service, upon compliance with the other provisions of this section, shall be sufficient service upon the said nonresident.
- (2) Notice of such service of process and copy thereof must be forthwith sent by certified or registered mail by plaintiff or the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles to the defendant, and the entries on the defendant's return receipt shall be sufficient evidence of the date on which notice of service upon the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles and copy of process were delivered to the defendant, on which date service on said defendant shall be deemed completed. If the defendant refuses to accept the certified or registered letter, service on the defendant shall be deemed completed on the date of such refusal to accept as determined by notations by the postal authorities on the original envelope, and if such date cannot be so determined, then service shall be deemed completed on the date that the certified or registered letter is returned to the plaintiff or Commissioner of Motor Vehicles, as determined by postal marks on the original envelope. If the certified or registered letter is not delivered to the defendant because it is unclaimed, or because the defendant has removed himself or herself from the defendant's last known address and has left no forwarding address or is unknown at the defendant's last known address, service on the defendant shall be deemed completed on the date that the certified or registered letter is returned to the plaintiff or Commissioner of Motor Vehicles.
- (3) The defendant's return receipt, or the original envelope bearing a notation by the postal authorities that receipt was refused, and an affidavit by the plaintiff that notice of mailing the registered letter and refusal to accept was forthwith sent to the defendant by ordinary mail, together with the plaintiff's affidavit of compliance with the provisions of this section, must be appended to the summons or other process and filed with said summons, complaint and other papers in the cause.

Provided, that where the nonresident motorist has died prior to the commencement of an action brought pursuant to this section, service of process shall be made on the executor or administrator of the nonresident motorist in the same manner and on the same notice as is provided in the case of a nonresident motorist.

The court in which the action is pending shall order such continuance as may be necessary to afford the defendant reasonable opportunity to defend the action.

(b) For service of process upon a defendant in a place not within the United States, the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles shall require a fee of one hundred dollars (\$100.00) and delivery by private carrier with proof of actual delivery to the defendant is allowed for personal service. (1929, c. 75, s. 1; 1941, c. 36, s. 4; 1951, c. 646; 1953, c. 796; 1955, c. 1022; 1961, c. 1191; 1963, c. 491; 1967, c. 954, s. 4; 1971, c. 420, ss. 1, 2; 1975, c. 294; 1989, c. 645, s. 1; 2024-30, s. 10(a).)