

TAG AND TITLE SOLUTIONS

FOR TIME-PRESSED FLEETS

Fleets know they need them and face significant sanctions if they lack them. But all too often, the day-to-day needs of the business push tag and title updates and record keeping to the background. If a fleet isn't careful, they may put vehicles on the road with expired plates and tags—a costly concern that leads to noncompliance.



TAG · TITLE · RENEWAL · MANAGEMENT



The pandemic ushered in a host of challenges for fleets. Headlines proclaimed COVID-19 had upended supply chains and caused a slew of labor challenges. But a lesser known—but equally substantive situation—challenged fleets with little media fanfare. Fleets struggled to keep titles and tags up to date as required by the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Motor Carriers Association, and state departments of motor vehicles.

State DMVs closed or reduced operating capacity across the country. States like Wisconsin and Georgia even dropped behind-the-wheel class requirements and road tests to get a driver's license.¹ But for fleets, the changes impacted more than a road test. They complicated their ability to register and assign a vehicle title or apply for new tags, both of which are compliance requirements.²

Over 40 states “made significant changes” to their standard operating procedures for vehicle registration and titling during the COVID-19 pandemic,³ found Cox Automotive's DealerTrack Titling Solutions. These changes

varied by state and jurisdiction, some processed title work without in-person transactions, others paused all activity, while some agencies continued business as usual.

Fleets unaware of delays and process changes faced significant barriers to complying with tag and title requirements. Kevin Hunter counted his 84, Pennsylvania, fleet among them. Hunter Trucking has 22 employees and its trucks transport heavy equipment across the country. But a backlog at PennDOT almost forced the company to shut down. Though Hunter registered on time, he waited months to receive yearly registration renewals.

“It's more than just a piece of paper on a desk,” he told wpixi.com. “People's families depend on us getting our proper paperwork.”⁴ A fleet cannot legally operate with expired tags.



BATTLING BACKLOGS

Two years later, fleets still struggle to get titles and tags, highlighting a persistent problem of backlogs at state Departments of Transportation and Motor Vehicle. These agencies emerged from their pandemic cocoons short-staffed. Now one person might do the job of three, leading to delays of up to three to four months.

Even agencies that remained fully open haven't escaped pandemic-related pressures. The Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT), for example, once worked three months ahead. Then a paper shortage affected the agency. Without paper, they couldn't print out decals, so KDOT went to month-of processing.

Despite these challenges, FMSCA requires fleets to keep tags and titles up to date. But what happens when time is limited, agency shutdowns and new processes proliferate? First, fleet owners should ask themselves the following questions:

- 1 | Is your fleet manager aware of the title and tag changes made during the pandemic? New processes, timelines and staff shortages have changed how state DOTs and DMVs process title and tag requests and the time it takes to do so.
- 2 | Do you have the manpower to learn and adapt to new processes? A learning curve comes with every change. How much time can your fleet manager spend learning?
- 3 | Are all of your tags and titles up to date today? If not, does your fleet manager maintain a schedule for when renewals must occur? Remember to allow more time for renewals. Processing that once took less than 30 days now takes months.
- 4 | Did you know that there are more efficient means of handling tag and title requirements than doing it in-house? Third parties can take this task off fleet managers' plates.





POST-PANDEMIC CHALLENGES

Fleets often view licensing, titling and registration as little more than an inconvenience. When labor issues and customer demand for on-time services and loads reign as king, who has time for other tasks? Still, most fleet managers understand that being current and compliant is vital to keeping vehicles on the road. Without current titles and tags, they legally cannot operate their fleets. And if they do, they face stiff consequences through penalties and lost road time.

Downtime due to late or non-registered titles and expired registrations costs money. It is illegal to operate without current titles or tags. Even if the state suspends a vehicle's registration, fleets must keep paying salary and benefits to drivers, and possibly rental car fees until they resolve the issue. Fleets also must factor in lost revenue, which can run in the millions when hundreds or thousands of vehicles are involved.

IRP fleet renewals also stressed already strained state DOTs. States require every fleet to complete IRP renewals in February. This mandate slowed processing at DOT offices across the country.

Fleets also wait until the last minute to submit renewals, and then wonder why things get delayed. Fleet managers call in to talk to someone, but the tag office is swamped. Some tag offices are so overwhelmed that when you call them, their employees won't even take your call. They tell you to call back.

But states don't care about these challenges. They know responsible fleet managers will do whatever it takes to comply with documentation requirements. Thus, regulators penalize fleets if they operate without current titles and tags—even when delays are not their fault. The penalties can be severe, moving from imposed fines to vehicle impoundment and operational bans.



A BETTER WAY

It's a known fact—managing titling and registration renewals for a fleet can get time-consuming and complicated. But there are companies that can help. J3 Management Group of Decatur, Georgia, drove titling and registration throughout the pandemic without shutting down for a single day.

J3 Management Group accelerates the tag and title process as fleets leave the pandemic in the dust. The company works directly with state DMVs on a fleet's behalf to deliver a single solution that solves all vehicle license, title and registration issues. Fleets can trust J3 Management Group. The woman-owned enterprise is licensed, bonded and insured and provides a single point of contact for their services, which include:

1. **Monitor and verify expiration dates.**
2. **Procure titles and registrations.**
3. **Renew registrations on time.**
4. **Tackle duplicate title and registration requests.**
5. **Consolidate all fees and transaction costs for titles, tags and registrations into a single bill.**
6. **Customize licensing, titling and registration programs to fit unique fleet requirements.**

Fleets benefit with fewer tag and title headaches with a company like J3 Management Group on their side. J3 Management Group takes on the work to get fleets back to business.

Staffed by knowledgeable experts, J3 Management Group can track down titles and tags in nearly every state. They stay up to date with what's required by monitoring changes in state and county filing regulations. Then they follow processes to the letter to keep tags and titles up to date.

This strategy improves compliance. With J3 Management Group working behind the scenes, expired titles, tags and registrations never slip through the cracks. Their services help fleets eliminate tickets, violations, tows and impounds due to expired tags.

Their efforts also increase fleet productivity. Vehicles operate legally and do not risk grounding due to expired registrations.

Plus, when fleet managers know the costs of vehicle licensing, titling and registration upfront, they can budget better for them. J3 Management Group's advanced record-keeping services and reporting help fleets keep their finger on the pulse of registrations, titles and tags so none are missed.

Fleets experienced an eye-awakening when the pandemic shutdown DMVs across the country. No longer could they quickly address titling, licensing and registration needs. Those fleets waiting to the last minute quickly found themselves grounded, and even those who worked ahead, like Kevin Hunter, faced significant challenges. It's evident that outsourcing to J3 Management Group to manage license, title and registration services makes sense. It takes the onus off fleet managers and puts it on the experts, so they can focus on what they do best—operating and running a business.

1. [*****fox47.com/news/local/wisconsin-dot-to-allow-teens-to-skip-behind-the-wheel-drivers-test-to-address-backlog](https://www.fox47.com/news/local/wisconsin-dot-to-allow-teens-to-skip-behind-the-wheel-drivers-test-to-address-backlog)
2. [*****.usatoday.com/story/money/cars/2020/05/15/dmv-electronic-title-registration-cars-trucks-coronavirus-covid-19/5182830002/](https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/cars/2020/05/15/dmv-electronic-title-registration-cars-trucks-coronavirus-covid-19/5182830002/)
3. [*****.usatoday.com/story/money/cars/2020/05/15/dmv-electronic-title-registration-cars-trucks-coronavirus-covid-19/5182830002/](https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/cars/2020/05/15/dmv-electronic-title-registration-cars-trucks-coronavirus-covid-19/5182830002/)
4. [4 *****.wpxi.com/news/investigates/frustration-over-long-wait-times-penn-dot-vehicle-registration-titles/Z447HPPN6BHWXOGH-45SHPXN6CY/](https://www.wpxi.com/news/investigates/frustration-over-long-wait-times-penn-dot-vehicle-registration-titles/Z447HPPN6BHWXOGH-45SHPXN6CY/)

