

§ 20-127. Windows and windshield wipers.

(a) Windshield Wipers. – A vehicle that is operated on a highway and has a windshield shall have a windshield wiper to clear rain or other substances from the windshield in front of the driver of the vehicle and the windshield wiper shall be in good working order. If a vehicle has more than one windshield wiper to clear substances from the windshield, all the windshield wipers shall be in good working order.

(b) Window Tinting Restrictions. – A window of a vehicle that is operated on a highway or a public vehicular area shall comply with this subsection. The windshield of the vehicle may be tinted only along the top of the windshield and the tinting may not extend more than five inches below the top of the windshield or below the AS1 line of the windshield, whichever measurement is longer. Provided, however, an untinted clear film which does not obstruct vision but which reduces or eliminates ultraviolet radiation from entering a vehicle may be applied to the windshield. Any other window of the vehicle may be tinted in accordance with the following restrictions:

- (1) The total light transmission of the tinted window shall be at least thirty-five percent (35%). A vehicle window that, by use of a light meter approved by the Commissioner, measures a total light transmission of more than thirty-two percent (32%) is conclusively presumed to meet this restriction.
- (2) The light reflectance of the tinted window shall be twenty percent (20%) or less.
- (3) Tinted film or another material used to tint the window shall be nonreflective and shall not be red, yellow, or amber.

(b1) Notwithstanding subsection (b) of this section, a window of a vehicle that is operated on a public street or highway and which is subject to the provisions of Part 393 of Title 49 of the Code of Federal Regulations shall comply with the provisions of that Part.

(c) Tinting Exceptions. – The window tinting restrictions in subsection (b) of this section apply without exception to the windshield of a vehicle. The window tinting restrictions in subdivisions (b)(1) and (b)(2) of this section do not apply to any of the following vehicle windows:

- (1) A window of an excursion passenger vehicle, as defined in G.S. 20-4.01(27).
- (2), (3) Repealed by Session Laws 2012-78, s. 8, effective December 1, 2012. For applicability, see Editor's notes.
- (4) A window of a motor home, as defined in G.S. 20-4.01(27)k.
- (5) A window of an ambulance, as defined in G.S. 20-4.01(27)a.
- (6) The rear window of a property-hauling vehicle, as defined in G.S. 20-4.01(31).
- (7) A window of a limousine.
- (8) A window of a law enforcement vehicle.
- (9) A window of a multipurpose vehicle that is behind the driver of the vehicle. A multipurpose vehicle is a passenger vehicle that is designed to carry 10 or fewer passengers and either is constructed on a truck chassis or has special features designed for occasional off-road operation. A minivan and a pickup truck are multipurpose vehicles.
- (10) A window of a vehicle that is registered in another state and meets the requirements of the state in which it is registered.
- (11) A window of a vehicle for which the Division has issued a medical exception permit under subsection (f) of this section.

(d) Violations. – A person who does any of the following commits a Class 3 misdemeanor:

- (1) Applies tinting to the window of a vehicle that is subject to a safety inspection in this State and the resulting tinted window does not meet the window tinting restrictions set in this section.
- (2) Drives on a highway or a public vehicular area a vehicle that has a window that does not meet the window tinting restrictions set in this section.

(e) Defense. – It is a defense to a charge of driving a vehicle with an unlawfully tinted window that the tinting was removed within 15 days after the charge and the window now meets the window tinting restrictions. To assert this defense, the person charged shall produce in court, or submit to the prosecuting attorney before trial, a certificate from the Division of Motor Vehicles or the Highway Patrol showing that the window complies with the restrictions.

(f) Medical Exception. – A person who suffers from a medical condition that causes the person to be photosensitive to visible light may obtain a medical exception permit. To obtain a permit, an applicant shall apply in writing to the Drivers Medical Evaluation Program and have his or her doctor complete the required medical evaluation form provided by the Division. The permit shall be valid for five years from the date of issue, unless a shorter time is directed by the Drivers Medical Evaluation Program. The renewal shall require a medical recertification that the person continues to suffer from a medical condition requiring tinting.

A person may receive no more than four medical exception permits that are valid at any one time. A permit issued under this subsection shall specify the vehicle to which it applies, the windows that may be tinted, and the permitted levels of tinting. The permit shall be carried in the vehicle to which it applies when the vehicle is driven on a highway.

The Division shall give a person who receives a medical exception permit a sticker to place on the lower left-hand corner of the rear window of the vehicle to which it applies. The sticker shall be designed to give prospective purchasers of the vehicle notice that the windows of the vehicle do not meet the requirements of G.S. 20-127(b), and shall be placed between the window and the tinting when the tinting is installed. The Division shall adopt rules regarding the specifications of the medical exception sticker. Failure to display the sticker is an infraction punishable by a two hundred dollar (\$200.00) fine.

(g) The driver of a vehicle with tinted windows shall roll down the driver side window upon the approach of a law enforcement officer. If the officer approaches from the passenger side, the driver shall roll down the passenger window. (1937, c. 407, s. 90; 1953, c. 1254; 1955, c. 1157, s. 2; 1959, c. 1264, s. 7; 1967, c. 1077; 1985, c. 789; 1985 (Reg. Sess., 1986), c. 997; 1987, c. 567; 1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 1082, ss. 7-8.1; 1989, c. 770, s. 66; 1991 (Reg. Sess., 1992), c. 1007, s. 34; 1993, c. 539, s. 360; 1994, Ex. Sess., c. 24, s. 14(c); 1993 (Reg. Sess., 1994), c. 683, s. 1; c. 754, s. 4; 1995, c. 14, s. 1; c. 473, s. 1; 2000-75, s. 1; 2012-78, s. 8; 2013-360, s. 18B.14(j); 2015-163, s. 13; 2017-102, s. 5.2(b); 2025-47, s. 21; 2025-47, s. 22(d).)