

What is aircraft registration?

Private non-commercial aircraft based in Wisconsin are required to either obtain registration or file for an exemption. Wisconsin aircraft registration was first implemented in the 1950s at the same time that private aircraft were exempted from the local property tax. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) issues Federal registration for aircraft.

Do aircraft actually have license plates?

No. All aircraft are issued an "N" number by the FAA, for example "N-1234." This number must be displayed on a visible part of the aircraft. Having an "N" number does not mean that registration is current. Aircraft are issued a certificate of registration similar to the certificate of registration issued for highway vehicles.

How is aircraft registration enforced?

All aircraft using federal or state-financed airports must be registered with the FAA in order to use a publicly-financed airport. A match with DOT and FAA records is done annually to check for non-registered aircraft. Owners of unregistered aircraft are contacted by DOT. If aircraft registration fees are not paid, the FAA is contacted and a lien is placed on the aircraft listing DOT as a lienholder. This FAA lien is not removed until all fees, including late penalties, are paid to DOT. Bureau of Aeronautics staff on airport inspection trips will check for unregistered aircraft. If any unregistered aircraft are found, the owner will be sent a letter by DMV. Airport operators are also instructed to check for unregistered aircraft. As revenue from aircraft registration goes to Wisconsin airport maintenance and improvement funding, there has been very good cooperation with aircraft owners and airport operators in finding unregistered aircraft.

What is the annual volume for aircraft registration activities?

Registered aircraft as of December 31, 2010: 8,778
Renewals processed annually: averages 2,241, based in WI
Unregistered aircraft found through FAA match: averages 210 each year
Yearly average of late renewal notices sent: 207

For more information contact:

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