

Getting driver's licenses in Texas with severe MCS

by Jerry Evans



The Texas motor vehicle department accommodated three people with severe environmental illness, but it was not easy.

Keywords: accommodation, driver's license, motor vehicle department, environmental illness, multiple chemical sensitivity, MCS

We were three people who had moved to Texas from states on the East Coast. We now lived in the MCS camp near Seagoville, outside Dallas (the camp is now closed). One of us had lived in the camp for more than a year already; we really needed to get local driver's licenses.

The state of Texas has no income tax and they run their public services extremely lean. Their motor vehicle offices were notorious for long lines, and being toxic places. They sprayed pesticides inside every week or two, and they were crammed with people. Many Texans love the really strong fragrances.

How to get the licenses without major impact on our health?

One of us, I'll call her Sue, started calling some managers. She had to talk to several, and keep pestering them, but they eventually agreed to send out someone who could issue a license to someone who was homebound.

On the appointed day, two people showed up. One was a clerk, the other some sort of police officer. They were very friendly and told us they regularly visited people in nursing homes. They saw no problem doing everything outside, so we would not get sick from their fragrances.

They brought a portable eye tester we all had to look inside, and that went well. Then we had our photos taken. They'd brought a blue background (the color indicates the type of license), which was made of some light fabric. We hung it on a clothesline. When the wind started to flap it, the officer had to hold it down (see photo).

It all went well. They were both kind and flexible.

We explained our situation and asked if they'd ever been to any place this unusual. Yes, they had. Once they had to visit someone who had no immune system at all and lived in a special house. Only the clerk went inside and had to go through some sort of sterilization process.

After some weeks, our new Texas driver's licenses arrived in the mail, except Sue's. She eventually called about it and was told it had been cancelled.

The story of their visit to this unusual place had circulated inside the agency, and finally reached someone in authority who stopped the process of issuing the licenses. The two had already been sent out, but Sue's hadn't yet.

The logic was that if we could drive a car, we could get to their office. The clerk had made an error, they should only come out to people who are completely homebound, and just need an ID card.

Even though all the work had already been done, this mean official demanded that Sue start over and go to one of their offices, just on principle.

Sue was the sickest of the three of us; the one most hurt by pesticides. She fought with them for weeks, and eventually they relented and released her card.

Two years later

I bought a car two years later and had to get it registered. I paid someone to stand in the lines for me, while I waited outside. Yes, plural lines. The first line was for someone to check that the paperwork was done correctly! The second line was to hand in the paper work. I think there was a third line to pick up the license plates. And each line was long, with no number system. You really had to stand there in the line. What an absurd setup!

I can see why people in Texas hate their government, if this is how it all works there.

I've registered a car and got my license in two other states. In each there was just one line. I picked a number, waited outside, and came in when it was my turn. I think once I had to ask them to come get me when it was my turn, which they cheerfully did.

The Texas license story happened in 2001. I don't know what they do today. Back then, people didn't have smartphones to entertain themselves while waiting in line, and making it even more hazardous for people with EHS, like me.

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