

By Carolyn Lee

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Those Chase County residents wishing to renew their driver's licenses over the past two weeks have been frustrated. Due to the implementation of a new driver licensing system, and a power "blip," the transition from the old way of getting a license to the new has not been a smooth road.

For about the past two weeks, no one in Chase County has been able to renew their licenses in Imperial. Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) Director Beverly Neth said Monday that it will likely be Aug. 6 before renewals will again be taken at the courthouse by DMV examiners.

However, the Chase County Treasurer's office should be able to issue duplicates or new licenses for lost ones, by today (Thursday).

In the meantime, Neth urges people to contact surrounding counties or the North Platte DMV, which is open five days a week, for a license renewal.

Technical issues arose with the DMV's new driver licensing system while it was being programmed the evening of July 19. There was a "power blip," Neth said, near the Lincoln office while the new system was being programmed in.

"We were trying to deploy the software through our network from the Lincoln office," she said, when the program crashed.

That "pushed us back a number of days. It wreaks havoc with our original schedule."

The main DMV centers, such as North Platte, Kearney and Gering, were back up and running last Wednesday. Now, Neth said, "We're trying to roll out equipment installation in the 84 remaining counties."

In the old way to get a license the driver was examined by DMV examiners at the courthouse, took a written test, then walked upstairs to the treasurer's office to have a picture taken, the license was laminated and the process was complete.

The new system requires the driver to be examined by the DMV examiners, as in the past, then the driver will be issued a black and white permit by the treasurer's office, according to Chase County Treasurer Cindy Schoenberger.

The applicant must provide one document in case of a name change; two forms of proof of address, such as utility bills and a proof of social security number.

That information is then sent to a processing center, which performs security checks on the applicant. A drivers license is then mailed to the applicant.

The change was required by the Department of Homeland Security in the wake of 9/11.

Neth said renewal notices are sent to drivers 90 days prior to their license's expiration date. "They can take advantage of that 90-day period," she noted, in which to apply for a new license. "If it expired this week, I'd try to figure out how to get to one of the stations," she said, referring to the ones staffed five days a week, such as North Platte.

Neth advised that Ogallala's office will be back in service today (Thursday), and can be utilized. "If their (drivers) county is not offering services, I'd call the closest county," she continued.

In any case, the DMV examiners will be back in Imperial Aug. 6 with their portable systems, ready to begin issuing permits for licenses.