

1980 WL 120853 (S.C.A.G.)

Office of the Attorney General

State of South Carolina

September 3, 1980

***1 RE: Licensing of Newberry County Leased Vehicles**

Gary T. Pope
Newberry County Attorney
Post Office Box 156
Newberry, South Carolina 29108

Dear Mr. Pope:

You have requested an opinion as to whether the Department must issue permanent license plates, bearing the prefix 'CG' for vehicles which are leased by the county and to be operated by the Newberry County Sheriff's Department which, I assume, for the purposes of the opinion, is authorized by [Code of Laws of South Carolina § 4-9-30\(2\)](#).

Prior to 1978, [Code § 56-3-1710](#) controlled the issuance of license plates for motor vehicles operated by any Department of the State or any of its political subdivisions. That Section required the Department to design and supply special license plates for use on all publicly-owned motor vehicles operated by such entities. [Code § 56-3-780](#), before it was amended in 1978, allowed the issuance of permanent license plates which were to contain the prefix 'SG, CG or MG' for buses, trucks, motorcycles, trailers, semi-trailers and full trailers operated by the State or any political subdivision thereof. Notably absent from this Section was the term 'motor vehicles' and the requirement of ownership by a public entity. In 1978, [Code § 56-3-780](#) was amended to require that permanent license plates be issued by the Department for all motor vehicles operated by the State or any political subdivision thereof; except as provided for in [§ 56-3-1710](#). This exception was, in the opinion of this office, included to allow for the issuance of tags without the required prefixes to automobiles supplied for the Governor's personal use and to law enforcement officers when, in the opinion of the chief of the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division, it was advisable that such automobiles not be so marked, and to automobiles supplied to statewide elective state officials. It is the opinion of this office that [§ 56-3-780](#) was amended to require that permanent license plates be issued for all motor vehicles operated by the State or any political subdivision thereof so that these vehicles could be readily identified by the citizens of this State, whether leased or owned.

Yours very truly,

Richard D. Bybee
Assistant Attorney General

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