

Wolf signs Real ID law, expects new licenses in 2019

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HARRISBURG – Gov. Wolf on Friday signed legislation that brings Pennsylvania into compliance with the 2005 Real ID law enacted following the Sept. 11 terror attacks.

That law requires driver's licenses and ID cards to have security enhancements and to be issued to people who prove they are legally in the United States. That means Pennsylvania drivers or ID card holders will eventually have to obtain the more secure certificates to board commercial airliners or enter certain federal facilities.

Wolf signed the Pennsylvania Real ID Compliance Act at a ceremony at Harrisburg International Airport. The law, which takes effect in 90 days, allows PennDot to create an optional driver's license or state ID that will match the Real ID requirements to access airports, military bases, federal courthouses and other facilities in 2018 and beyond.

The legislation, however, doesn't require residents to obtain a driver's license or ID that meets federal Real ID standards. People without Real ID will still be able to use a passport to board commercial airliners or enter certain federal facilities.

Wolf's office said Pennsylvania Real ID should be available in early 2019. In the meantime, existing state IDs or passports will work at airports and federal facilities.

PennDot does not have a cost estimate, but making the current driver's license compliant will require a mark, or symbol, on the license as well as upgrades to back-office operations and

systems, said PennDot spokesman Rich Fitzpatrick. The law also requires drivers to present documentation, such as a birth certificate and Social Security card, the first time they get an ID-compliant license.

The federal Real ID Act stemmed from a recommendation by the 9/11 Commission to help curb the use of fake identification by terrorists by setting minimum standards all states should follow when issuing ID cards such as driver's licenses. Among the things the act required that licenses and IDs have are: full legal name; features that prevent tampering, counterfeiting, or duplication; and an RFID chip or machine readable technology that can be used to pull up biographical or biometric data.

Before Friday, Pennsylvania was the largest state that has not complied with the law, passed by Congress after the 2001 terror attacks.