

**§ 20-35. Penalties for violating Article; defense to driving without a license.**

(a) Penalty. – Except as otherwise provided in subsection (a1) or (a2) of this section, a violation of this Article is a Class 2 misdemeanor unless a statute in the Article sets a different punishment for the violation. If a statute in this Article sets a different punishment for a violation of the Article, the different punishment applies.

(a1) The following offenses are Class 3 misdemeanors:

- (1) Failure to obtain a license before driving a motor vehicle, in violation of G.S. 20-7(a).
- (2) Failure to comply with license restrictions, in violation of G.S. 20-7(e).
- (3) Permitting a motor vehicle owned by the person to be operated by an unlicensed person, in violation of G.S. 20-34.

(a2) A person who does any of the following is responsible for an infraction:

- (1) Fails to carry a valid license while driving a motor vehicle, in violation of G.S. 20-7(a).
- (2) Operates a motor vehicle with an expired license, in violation of G.S. 20-7(f).
- (3) Fails to notify the Division of an address change for a drivers license within 60 days after the change occurs, in violation of G.S. 20-7.1.

(b) Repealed by Session Laws 1993 (Reg. Sess., 1994), c. 761, s. 4.

(c) Defenses. – A person may not be found responsible for failing to carry a regular drivers license if, when tried for that offense, the person produces in court a regular drivers license issued to the person that was valid when the person was charged with the offense. A person may not be found responsible for driving a motor vehicle with an expired drivers license if, when tried for that offense, the person shows all the following:

- (1) That, at the time of the offense, the person had an expired license.
- (2) The person renewed the expired license within 30 days after it expired and now has a drivers license.
- (3) The person could not have been charged with driving without a license if the person had the renewed license when charged with the offense.

(d) Defense for Deployed Member of the Armed Forces of the United States. – A person may not be found responsible for driving a motor vehicle with an expired drivers license if, when tried for that offense, the person provides verifiable written proof of deployment and establishes the following:

- (1) The person was deployed as a member of the Armed Forces of the United States when the drivers license expired.
- (2) The person obtained a renewed drivers license within 30 days after returning from deployment. (1935, c. 52, s. 29; 1991, c. 726, s. 14; 1993, c. 539, s. 324; 1994, Ex. Sess., c. 24, s. 14(c); 1993 (Reg. Sess., 1994), c. 761, s. 4; 2013-360, s. 18B.14(g); 2013-385, s. 4; 2021-89, s. 2(a).)