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Long Name May Mean Higher Registration Fee

State Not Sure How Many People Affected

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NASHVILLE, Tenn. -- If a name has too many letters in it, it could cost residents extra at registration renewal time.

 **Video: Long Name Could Mean Higher Car Registration**

Channel 4 News has learned if residents have a long name, they could be overpaying their taxes.

"If you're a Tennessean and you've got a long name and a little truck, you better watch out," said Everette Parrish.

There's something about Parrish's name that caused the Davidson County clerk's office to send him a tax bill that was too high: his name's length.

He said he when he went to the MetroCenter office to renew his tags, he asked the clerk why his Taurus cost \$55 but his Nissan truck cost \$66.

"She said, 'Oh, your name is too long,'" he said. "She rolled her eyes as if it was a common problem, and said, 'Oh, I can fix that.' And she typed and right away it came up \$55 instead of \$66."

As it turned out, if a person's name has more than a certain number of characters, the computer figures he or she must be a business, so he or she is charged the commercial rate, which costs \$11 more.

"It appears to be a programming issue. Thank you for letting us know about this. We didn't know about this," Sophie Moery of the Tennessee Department of Revenue told Channel 4's Nancy Amons.

The Department of Revenue sends out the renewal notices and after some research discovered the problem is specific to Davidson County.

In 1993, the county asked the state to reprogram its computers so that if a name has more than a certain number of characters, they are reclassified as commercial. No one could say how many people have been overcharged.

"It's just a function of the software, and we realize it's not the way we need the software to work," said Davidson County clerk's office representative Kelly Farmer.

The clerk's office said it will give refunds to anyone who paid too much. Parrish said he's glad Channel 4 got to the bottom of it on behalf of all the people with long names.

"I guess Nancy Amons would not have a problem, but Demetria Kalodimos might," he said.

How can you tell if you've been overcharged? Look at the sticker on a license plate. It will either say passenger or commercial. If it says commercial, but the vehicle isn't used for business, the resident might get \$11 back.

The way Parrish's name was typed in compounded the problem.

Instead of using a separate box for his first, last and middle names, the clerk typed the whole name into one box, which made it seem extra long.

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