

Window Tinting in Arizona and California

A practical guide for drivers, patients and installers

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Choose window film by its measured performance, the window being treated and the law that applies. UV protection, heat rejection and visible darkness are different properties. A medical recommendation does not automatically make every shade or installation lawful.

The differences that matter most

Topic	Arizona	California
Front side windows	33% combined visible light transmission, with statutory $\pm 3\%$ tolerance.	Clear, colorless film: at least 88% film VLT and at least 70% combined VLT, plus other requirements.
Rear side windows	No minimum VLT stated; reflectance restrictions apply.	No minimum VLT under §26708(b)(4).
Rear windshield	No minimum VLT stated; see reflectance and mirror rules.	No minimum VLT if both outside mirrors provide the required rear view.
Medical process	Apply to MVD; the department issues the exemption.	Carry the required signed certification for the specific statutory route.
Medical windshield film	The medical exemption does not cover the windshield.	Clear UV film may qualify under the dermatologist provision; dark film is not authorized.

Sources: A.R.S. §28-959.01; ADOT Medical Review; California Vehicle Code §26708. Details and source links appear below. [1–5]

Understand the numbers

Visible light transmission (VLT) is the percentage of visible light that passes through. A lower number means a darker window. UV rejection measures ultraviolet filtering; reflectance measures how much light is reflected outward. Total solar energy rejection (TSER) describes overall solar energy rejection and is more useful for comparing heat performance than an isolated infrared percentage. [1, 7, 8]

For a rough estimate, multiply bare-glass VLT by film-only VLT. For example, 80% glass $\times$ 90% film $\approx$ 72% combined VLT. The installer should meter the finished window. Do not multiply again when a specification already describes film installed on reference glass.

Arizona rules and medical exemptions

Standard installations

Front side windows and wing vents use a combined glass-and-film VLT threshold of 33%, with a statutory tolerance of $\pm 3\%$. The reflectance limit is 35%, also with a $\pm 3\%$ tolerance. Treat the tolerance as measurement allowance rather than a target for the darkest possible installation. A product labeled “35” does not establish the finished window’s reading. [1]

Rear side and rear windows have no minimum VLT stated in §28-959.01. Subsection (A)(6) specifies reflectance of 35% $\pm 3\%$ or less. The statute also provides a rear-window exception where outside mirrors on both sides show at least 200 feet behind the vehicle. A straightforward installation plan is to retain both functional outside mirrors and stay within the stated reflectance limit. [1]

Windshield strips and clear film

Arizona permits transparent material at the topmost windshield portion if its lower edge is at least 29 inches above the undepressed driver’s seat, measured from a point five inches ahead of the bottom of the backrest, with the seat fully rearward and lowered and the vehicle level. The strip cannot be red or amber. [1]

ADOT’s application says the medical exemption does not apply below the AS-1 line. The statute itself uses the seat-based measurement above. Have the installer verify the permitted strip boundary; do not assume a generic “five-inch strip” is the rule. A nearly clear film is not automatically lawful across the full windshield merely because it blocks UV. [1, 3]

How a medical exemption works

- Obtain an individualized medical evaluation. The legal standard is a medical need to be shielded from direct sunlight; the statute does not provide an automatic diagnosis checklist. [1]
- Complete the current ADOT Application for Window Tint Medical Exemption, Form 40-1511, with vehicle information and certification by an MD, DO, NMD or ophthalmologist. The form requires a personal examination and inadequate protection from eye-protective devices alone. [3]
- Submit the application to ADOT Medical Review. ADOT’s FAQ additionally requests a physician letter and vehicle registration copy; including those with the current form addresses both published instructions. [2–4]
- Obtain the department-issued exemption before relying on it for an otherwise noncompliant installation. A physician letter supports the application but is not itself the MVD exemption. Keep the certificate in the vehicle and follow its conditions. [1, 2]

The exemption may cover a vehicle the person owns or one in which the person is a habitual passenger. It authorizes changes to side or rear windows, not the windshield. The statute does not supply a universal exempt VLT or a universal three-year term; use the actual approval and any stated expiration or conditions. [1]

California rules and medical provisions

Ordinary clear film on the front side windows

Vehicle Code §26708(d) allows clear, colorless, transparent material on the windows immediately left and right of the front seat when all requirements are met. The material must transmit at least 88% of visible light; the finished glass-and-film assembly must transmit at least 70% and meet the referenced federal glazing and abrasion requirements. The material must enhance UVA blocking. A generic “70% tint” label does not demonstrate compliance. [5]

Carry the signed installer compliance certificate identifying the installer and film manufacturer by full name and street address. Owner-installed film uses the manufacturer certificate described in the statute. Replace or remove film that tears, bubbles or otherwise impairs clear vision. No medical letter is required for an installation meeting this ordinary front-side-window provision. [5]

Medical route one Clear UV film

Section 26708(e) permits clear, colorless, transparent UV-protective material on the windshield, side or rear windows when the statutory conditions are met. It retains the minimum 88% material VLT, minimum 70% combined VLT, federal glazing requirements and UVA-blocking purpose. [5]

The driver must carry, personally or in the vehicle, a certificate signed by a licensed dermatologist certifying the UV-related medical need for the clear film. This provision does not authorize dark permanent windshield or front-side tint. It has no prohibition on nighttime use like the removable-device route. Damaged film that impairs vision must be removed or replaced. [5]

Medical route two Removable sun screens

Section 26708(b)(10) permits qualifying devices on the front side windows when the driver or front-seat passenger possesses a signed physician-and-surgeon letter for a medical condition, or an optometrist letter for a visual condition. These devices cannot be used during darkness. [5]

Section 26708.2 requires ready removal, such as a frame, temporary fasteners or a roller shade. Transparent devices must be green, gray or neutral smoke and transmit at least 35% of light. Reflectivity cannot exceed 35% on either surface. Louvered or patterned devices require at least 35% open area and opaque sections no more than 3/16 inch in projected vertical dimension, with an essentially uniform pattern. Ordinary adhesive tint is not made compliant just because it could eventually be peeled off. [6]

Rear windows and windshield strips

Rear side windows have no minimum VLT under §26708(b)(4). The rear window has no minimum VLT when both outside mirrors provide at least a 200-foot rear view. The ordinary top windshield strip uses the same detailed 29-inch seat-based measurement described on the Arizona page; it cannot be red or amber, carry opaque lettering, distort vision or create more reflected glare than untreated glass. [5]

These medical provisions use carried documentation rather than an Arizona-style DMV-issued tint permit. A letter must match the applicable route; it is not permission for any desired shade. [5, 6]

Choosing film and checking an installation

Clear UV film exists

Manufacturer data demonstrate substantial UV filtering with little additional visible darkening. The examples below describe film on reference clear glass, not film-only VLT. They illustrate available technology and do not certify a particular vehicle installation as California-compliant. [7, 8]

Film	VLT on reference glass	Reported UV rejection
LLumar AU 85 UV	87%	Over 99%
LLumar AIR 90	84%	Over 99%
3M Crystalline 90	86%	99.9%

LLumar's cited sheet measures UV protection over 300–380 nm. Do not interpret a "99% UV" marketing claim as verified performance at every wavelength through 400 nm. When wavelength coverage matters clinically, request a spectral transmission report. 3M's cited sheet shows reference clear glass at 89% VLT before film and 86% with Crystalline 90. [7, 8]

Match performance to the purpose

For UV filtering with minimal visual change, ask for clear UV film and documented UVA performance. For heat reduction, compare TSER and full-range infrared energy rejection at similar VLT. For glare or privacy, compare visible transmission separately. Neither "ceramic" nor "medical grade" is proof of legal compliance, and darker film is not automatically better at filtering UV. [7, 8]

Questions to ask before paying

- What exact manufacturer, product and shade will go on each window? Are the published VLT numbers film-only or film-on-glass?
- What is the bare-glass VLT, and what finished VLT will you document? Will existing tint be removed first?
- Which statutory provision permits this installation? For California clear-film routes, can you document the 88% material requirement as well as the 70% assembly requirement?
- What do the UV and infrared percentages actually measure? Can I see the technical data sheet and an installed sample?
- Will you provide the required certificate, an itemized installation record and warranty? Will you check visibility, haze, color shift and compatibility with vehicle equipment?

After installation and when crossing state lines

Keep the appropriate medical or MVD documentation and installation records in the vehicle. Evaluate visibility in low light and replace deteriorated film. For a California removable screen, remove or retract it before driving during darkness. [2, 5, 6]

Do not assume an Arizona exemption or registration creates automatic recognition in California. For a vehicle routinely used in both states, plan around both sets of requirements and obtain state-specific guidance for any disputed installation. A California medical windshield-film provision does not create an Arizona windshield exemption.

Sources and practical reference

This guide addresses ordinary passenger-vehicle window film and the cited medical provisions. It is educational information, not an individualized legal opinion or a certification that a particular installation complies. Check the current statute, vehicle measurements and any exemption conditions before installation.

Arizona

[1] [Arizona Revised Statutes §28-959.01 — window materials and medical exemption](#)

[2] [ADOT Medical Review — window tinting exemption process](#)

[3] [ADOT Form 40-1511 — Application for Window Tint Medical Exemption](#)

[4] [ADOT FAQ — application documents](#)

ADOT Medical Review: MedicalReview@azdot.gov • 602-771-2460. Use the current application and agency instructions for submission. [2, 3]

California

[5] [Vehicle Code §26708 — current statutory text reproduced by FindLaw](#)

[Official California Legislative Information — §26708](#)

[6] [Vehicle Code §26708.2 — removable sun-screen requirements](#)

[Official California Legislative Information — §26708.2](#)

Film performance

[7] [LLumar automotive performance data — August 2025 sheet](#)

[8] [3M Crystalline technical data — Revision D April 2022](#)

Product specifications may change. Ask the installer for the current technical data for the exact product supplied. Published reference-glass measurements cannot substitute for testing your own windows.

Three distinctions to remember

Arizona: physician certification supports an application; MVD issues the exemption. California: the clear-film and removable-screen provisions are separate. In either state: UV protection and visible darkness are different measurements.