INFO: PDF417 Reading Issues with Florida Drivers Licenses

Background

Customers have reported difficulties getting successful reads from the PDF417 barcodes on the rear of some Florida State drivers licenses and IDs.

This is a quality issue with the creation of the barcodes.

Cause

The Florida DMV has confirmed that a subset of drivers licenses - including some printed as recently as 2022 - contain PDF417 barcodes that are completely unreadable by standard scanning technology. Through extensive testing, we've found these problematic barcodes exhibit severe quality defects (including extreme blurring, heavy smudging, and critical misprinting) that prevent successful decoding by our SDK or any other scanning solutions we've evaluated.

When present, these defects are beyond what standard correction algorithms can repair, resulting in inconsistent or failed read attempts across all scanning methods. While the DMV has improved its processes, we continue to encounter these unreadable licenses in circulation.

Confirmation

Not every failure to read a PDF417 barcode on a license is due to this specific issue.

Recommended Customer Troubleshooting Steps

Verify the physical barcode

Check whether the affected licenses are from Florida and inspect the barcode for blurring, smudging, or printing defects.

Test the capture hardware

Capture the same license using a different mobile device, scanner or camera to determine

whether the original device is producing an insufficient-quality image.

Review image preprocessing

Compare the original scanned image against the processed image. Temporarily disable preprocessing to determine whether any image enhancements are unintentionally degrading the barcode.

Test independent PDF417 decoders

Try decoding the original, unprocessed image using another PDF417 decoding tool to determine whether the barcode itself is readable.

Mitigation

In some cases, it may be possible to get a non-readable barcode to read in DotImage by up scaling the image.

This method should be tried only after attempting to read produces no result...

```
rivate IList<String> ReadBarsWithUpscaleAndThreshold(AtalaImage sourceImage) { // 3x upscale using Lanczos filter for high-quality interpolation using (AtalaImage upscaled = new ResampleCommand( new Size(sourceImage.Width * 3, sourceImage.Height * 3), ResampleMethod.LanczosFilter).Apply(sourceImage).Image) { ReadOpts options = new ReadOpts { Symbology = Symbologies.Pdf417, Direction = Directions.All, ScanBarsToRead = 1, ReadingQuality = ReadingQuality.MostAccurate }; using (BarCodeReader reader = new BarCodeReader(upscaled, true)) { BarCode[] codes = reader.ReadBars(options); if (codes != null && codes.Length > 0) { return codes.Select(c => c.DataString).ToList(); } } } return null; }
```

This is not guaranteed, but the strategy to try up-scaling has helped on some marginal barcodes.

Last Update

2026-11-02 - TD - (Created Article)

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