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Drivers and tax collectors 'livid' over repeated system crashes

Steve Bousquet, Times/Herald Tallahassee Bureau

Irate Florida tax collectors say they are being forced to turn away thousands of customers because of repeated breakdowns in the state database that stores records of millions of drivers licenses and car and truck registrations.

"Our customers are livid," Hillsborough Tax Collector **Doug Belden** wrote in an email on Monday. "There appears to be a major problem." His chief IT expert, **Kirk Sexton**, described the breakdowns as "severe" and wrote in a memo that the glitches also affect law enforcement's ability to run checks on motorists.

"Totally unacceptable," Manatee County Tax Collector **Ken Burton** wrote in an email. He said his front-line staff members who deal with customers report a problem every 3.7 days between April 1 and Sept. 30 of this year.

It's not new. The creaky database has been [plagued by problems for years](#), and the Legislature has appropriated money to modernize it. But the crashes continue and they're driving tax collectors crazy.

Pasco County Tax Collector **Mike Fasano** holds Saturday office hours, but said he had to turn away more than 1,000 customers because the system was down. "It's just constant," said Fasano, who in a letter to the state cited the "frequency and duration" of system breakdowns. In his frustration, Fasano says he's seriously thinking of telling disgruntled customers to "send a note to the governor" until the problems are fixed.

Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles executive director **Terry Rhodes** wrote a letter to House Speaker-Designate **Richard Corcoran**, R-Land O'Lakes, explaining all that has gone wrong with the system, including "forced relocation logistics, aging hardware, a constantly growing data set (and) expanding utilization" which together are "compromising system availability."

The department is a Cabinet-level agency, and Rhodes reports to Scott and all three Cabinet members, which is where the buck stops in this case. Rhodes' spokeswoman, **Beth Frady**, told the *Times/Herald*: "We understand our customers' frustration. This is not the type of service that we want to offer. The department is working to improve the system." DHSMV's system also plays a critical role in verifying new voter

registration forms but Frady said that function has not been impaired by the recent breakdowns.

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