

Did you know...

Who is responsible for submitting the Seller's Report of Sale?

If you sell or trade your vehicle, **the seller** (not the dealer or new buyer) **is responsible** for completing and submitting a Seller's Report to the Department of Licensing, within 5 days of selling the vehicle. You are responsible for that vehicle until the Seller's Report is completed. You may file a report of sale online at www.dol.wa.gov or file in person at a vehicle licensing office.

How and where do I submit a Seller's Report of Sale?

All Washington titles have a Seller's Report attached. Or, you can obtain one from any licensing office where you transfer titles, renew license plate tabs, etc. You can also submit a completed Seller's Report at a licensing office, or on the Internet at www.dol.wa.gov. **Keep a copy for yourself.**

Does the Lemon Law apply to used vehicles?

The Lemon Law applies primarily to new vehicles. It may apply to a used vehicle depending on the circumstances. Call the Attorney General's Consumerline at 1-800-541-8898 for information and a brochure.

Is there a limit on interest rates?

There is no limit, cap, or ceiling on what a dealer can charge for interest rates when a dealer is carrying the loan. You may save money by arranging for your own financing before you start shopping for a vehicle.

Who do I call about repossessions?

Contact the Attorney General's Consumerline at 1-800-551-4636 for information and a brochure.

Can I find out about the previous owner?

The dealer is not required to provide the

previous owner's name and address to a buyer. The Department of Licensing is prevented, by public disclosure laws, from disclosing previous owner information.

Can I get out of a contract?

Once you sign a contract you are bound by that contract. Read and understand each document before you sign! Helpful hints:

- You should always get a copy of each document you sign for your records
- Get all verbal promises and representations in writing
- Do not sign the contract unless you have read, and understand, all of its terms and agreements
- Never, never, sign a contract with spaces left blank. Mark them out or fill them in appropriately
- By law, before you sign the contract, the dealer must separately disclose in writing the finance charge, insurance costs, taxes and other charges you are to pay under the contract. If they're different from those you negotiated, insist they be corrected.

Can I change my mind after three days?

No. Washington law does not provide for a three-day cooling-off period when you purchase a vehicle, **at a licensed location.** Once you sign the contract, the car is yours.

What is a curbstoner?

An unlicensed dealer or car "flipper." These are individuals who regularly buy cars to fix them up to appear decent. They then sell them (usually tax free) for a quick profit.

These individuals do not have a dealer license, bond, insurance, place of business or the responsibility to the customers that is required of a legal dealer. You have little to no protection when buying a vehicle from a curbstoner.

If you don't have a dealer license, it is illegal to:

- Sell more than 4 vehicles registered to you in any 12 months.

- Buy and sell vehicles for the purpose of making a profit.
- Sell any number of vehicles that aren't registered to you.

If you respond to a classified ad and the seller has several cars for sale not registered in his/her name you may be buying from a curbstoner. Purchasing vehicles from these individuals significantly increases your risks of not being able to get the vehicle title transferred. You could be purchasing a car which has been wrecked, insurance destroyed and rebuilt, that has a "rolled back" odometer, is a lemon, or even has flood or other undisclosed damage. No matter who you buy from, insist on a thorough test drive and an independent mechanical inspection before you sign and buy.

Does a dealer have to perform a safety check before he can sell a vehicle?

No. However it is a violation of dealer licensing regulations for a dealer to sell a car which does not have the following:

- Working headlights, taillights, brakelights
- Turn signals
- Brakes
- Windshields with no cracks obstructing the driver's clear view of the road
- Working windshield wipers
- Tires with a minimum tread depth of 2/32 of an inch, with no bulges, bumps, exposed cord or ply

What should I do before I buy?

At a minimum, take the vehicle to a mechanic and have the engine, other mechanical parts, emission control system, and safety equipment inspected and tested. If a dealer or private party is reluctant or refuses to allow an inspection, **walk away.** Vehicles roll off the assembly line every day. Don't be duped into thinking that one particular vehicle is the only one of its kind. There are millions more out there to choose from!

Is a VIN Inspection a safety check?

No. In fact VIN inspections are no longer required, except in cases where a vehicle has been rebuilt.

Does a vehicle have to be tested, and pass, a vehicle emissions test before a dealer can sell a vehicle to the public?

No. However, purchase orders in emissions areas must have a disclosure statement on used vehicles (no longer under the manufacturer's warranty) indicating that an owner of a vehicle may be required to spend up to \$150 for repairs if the vehicle does not meet the vehicle emissions standards. Emission testing is not required statewide. For additional information, contact the Department of Ecology, at the phone number listed on the back of this brochure, or visit their website.

What about private party sales?

If you live in an inspection program area and you purchase a used vehicle from a private party it must have a valid emission inspection certificate to be registered under your name.

Implied warranty of merchantability on used cars

Every vehicle sold in Washington by a dealer has an "implied" warranty that the vehicle will be fit for ordinary driving purposes. That means the vehicle must be free of major defects, reasonably safe, and of the average quality of similar vehicles available for sale in that price range. The duration and extent of coverage is conditioned on the age, mileage and price of the vehicle as well as the nature and timing of the problem. For more information, contact the Attorney General's Consumerline at 1-800-551-4636 for information and a brochure.

“As-Is” is just that

Most used vehicles are offered by dealers “as-is.” **If you waive the implied warranty and the vehicle breaks down, you will be responsible for all repairs.** As an informed buyer, you should consider whether negotiating away your implied warranty rights is really in your best interest.

Vehicle Titles

If I buy a car from a dealer, who does the title transfer?

The dealer is responsible for transferring the vehicle into the new owner’s name and providing plates, tabs, and registration.

How long does a dealer have to transfer title?

A dealer should transfer a vehicle’s title **within 45 days from the date of delivery.**

What do I do if my dealer temporary permit expires or is about to expire?

First, contact the dealer. The dealer may have your plates or tabs at the place of business. If the dealer does not have your plates or tabs, and your temporary permit has expired, you can call one of the Dealer Services regional offices listed on this brochure.

Does a VIN inspection need to be done before the title is transferred?

No. A VIN inspection is required for rebuilt vehicles.

Does the dealer have to disclose if the vehicle been insurance destroyed, rebuilt, or salvaged?

Yes. Under Washington State Law the dealer must disclose, in writing, **on the purchase agreement**, the following:

- That the vehicle’s certificate of ownership (title) has been branded. Examples may be (but not limited to) salvage/rebuilt, destroyed, or junk.

- That the vehicle has been declared totaled out by an insurance company and then rebuilt.
- That the vehicle’s title contains the specific comment that the vehicle is rebuilt.

How do I transfer a title between private parties?

Before finalizing the deal and paying for the car, be sure to get all of the necessary papers to title your car. You will need the following:

- *Odometer Disclosure Statement* form filled out and signed by the owner and the buyer. **If the car is 10 years old or older you do not need the Odometer Disclosure Statement.**
- All owners listed on the title must release ownership in the vehicle. The owner(s) do so by signing the appropriate space(s) on the title. If the title is lost, an Affidavit of Loss/Release of Interest or Affidavit in Lieu of Title form must be completed and signed by all of the owners shown on the title record. The forms must be signed in the presence of a notary public and notarized by the notary, or signed in the presence of a vehicle licensing agent, at a vehicle licensing agent’s office, and certified by the agent. The Affidavit of Loss/Release of Interest form may be obtained from the Department of Licensing website at www.dol.wa.gov, under vehicle & vessel forms. The Affidavit in Lieu of Title may be obtained from any Department of Licensing office.
- A valid emissions statement if you live in King, Pierce, Clark, Snohomish, or Spokane counties.

There is a penalty if the new owner does not change the title into their name within 15 calendar days from the date of purchase. The penalty is \$50 on the 16th day plus \$2 for each day thereafter up to a maximum fine of \$125. After 45 days, failure to transfer title is a misdemeanor.

For more information

For brochures on the Lemon Law, buying and leasing vehicles, repossessions, and mechanic’s liens:

Attorney General’s Office Consumerline
1-800-551-4636
www.atg.wa.gov/contactus.aspx

Attorney General’s Office Lemon Law
1-800-541-8898
www.atg.wa.gov/lemon-law-0

Information on emission testing:

Department of Ecology
Pierce & Clark County: 1-800-272-3780
King & Snohomish County: 1-800-272-3780
Spokane County: (509) 329-3491

Prices of used cars:

See the N.A.D.A.OfficialUsedCarGuide or the KellyBlueBook. Your local bank or credit union may have a copy. Many libraries also provide these publications in their reference sections.

General licensing information:

See the Department of Licensing’s website at www.dol.wa.gov

Dealer Services Office:

Olympia
(360) 664-6475

Dealer Services does not regulate private party sales.

We are committed to providing equal access to our services. For information visit dol.wa.gov/access. (TDD/TTY call 711).

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Washington State
Department of Licensing

Fast facts and helpful hints

Buying a Vehicle



dol.wa.gov