

When your vehicle has been so badly damaged (from an accident or a flood, for example) that the cost of repair exceeds its dollar value, what you have on your hands is a salvage vehicle. This means either you (the owner), someone acting on your behalf, or an insurer has determined that the cost of labor and parts (minus the monetary value of the vehicle) makes a repair or a rebuild a cost-prohibitive option.

If repairs are made using similar make and model parts to replicate a vehicle originally made by a distinctive manufacturer, the state will consider it either a "reconstructed" or "repaired vehicle." With the exception of glider kits, this goes for any salvage vehicles that require a brand, including replica (kit) vehicles.

A branded title clearly states that the vehicle is either reconstructed or repaired in order to notify potential buyers that the vehicle has indeed endured damage that may cause additional problems in the future. The state will issue a salvage certificate if it matches the definition of such as stated in Section 49-123(m) of the Idaho Code. This also includes vehicles that the owner or an insurance company considers the result of an unrecovered theft.

Should an insurance company declare a vehicle a salvage vehicle after doling out cash (or making an equivalent settlement as compensation for the total loss), it must issue a salvage certificate naming that vehicle either a "salvage vehicle" or a "total-loss vehicle."

Total-Loss Vehicle

A total-loss vehicle is one that scrapping, dismantling, or destruction has caused it to be considered cost-prohibitive to fix. The compensation for such a loss, paid either by an insurance company or an individual, must not cover medical care costs, or any such payments associated with bodily injury, car rental, or anything else other than the money paid for the vehicle's actual damage.

Owner-retained Salvage

This title applies when the owner hangs onto the vehicle after it has been declared a total loss.

Salvage Pool

This describes a licensed vehicle dealer who makes it his/her primary business to dispose of salvage vehicles, stolen vehicles that have been recovered, or both.

Exceptions to the Rule

Salvage and branding requirements do not apply to motorcycles, manufactured homes, all-terrain vehicles, class A or C motor homes, vessels, and trailers.

Getting a Salvage Certificate

Every salvage vehicle must have a salvage certificate. As the new document of legal ownership, this certificate replaces any previous title or manufacturer's certificate of origin (MCO). Such a certificate is required when:

The vehicle was damaged so badly that it has been declared a total loss, and an insurance company has shelled out the cash to the owner to cover the damage and, therefore, has obtained the certificate of title.

The vehicle was damaged so badly that it has been declared a total loss, and an insurance company has shelled out the cash to the owner to cover the damage, and the owner kept the vehicle and its title.

In this instance, the insurance company must give the department a heads up. The owner must also contact the Idaho Transportation Department within 15 days of the date when the claim was satisfied and apply for a Salvage Certificate of Title.

A salvage pool obtains the salvage vehicle and must issue an Idaho Salvage Certificate of Title because ownership is not otherwise proven with a salvage certificate. It must also surrender the ownership documents and a copy of the salvage certificate to the DMV, as well as pay any salvage certificate fees.

An insurance company did not cough up any money for the damage, and the owner declares the vehicle a salvage vehicle. In this case, the owner must contact the Idaho Transportation Department and apply for a salvage certificate of title him/herself.

Inspections, Branding, and Rebuilding Vehicles

Sometimes, salvage vehicles can be rebuilt and put back on the road. The following information applies to vehicles less than five years old or those that had pre-damage values of more than \$6,000.

Initial Inspection

You must have the vehicle's major component parts inspected before it gets rebuilt; there is a \$25 fee. Any rebuilding of the vehicle done before the initial inspection takes place must be met by a new certificate of title. The vehicle will then be designated a "reconstructed vehicle."

The vehicle can receive a "repaired vehicle" decal after it is rebuilt or repaired, if the inspector finds that one or no major component parts requires repair or replacement.

The vehicle can receive a "reconstructed vehicle" decal after it is rebuilt or repaired, if the inspector finds that two or more major component parts require repair or replacement, or if the vehicle shows evidence of flood damage.

Final Inspection

Before you head to the DMV to get the vehicle titled and registered, you must first have the vehicle rebuilt and presented to an inspector for its final inspection. He/she will slap on either a "reconstructed vehicle" or a "repaired vehicle" decal and will also double check on the ownership of all major components and significant parts.

You, as the owner, must provide a current bill of sale (or traceable invoice) from each previous part owner that displays the vehicle identification number and identifies this person by name and address. The decal attachment will run you \$10.

Rebuilding Older Vehicles

Vehicles that are older than six years and have pre-damage values of less than \$6,000 do not have to undergo salvage vehicle inspections. However, the person conducting the rebuild or repair must fill out a Salvage Vehicle Affidavit (form ITD-3311).

Whomever applies for the salvage certificate must state on this affidavit whether the vehicle is being repaired. The title will then brand the vehicle a "reconstructed vehicle."