

In Ohio, a vehicle is considered salvaged if it has been dismantled, destroyed, or changed in such a way that it loses its character as a motor vehicle. Or, it has been altered in a manner that it is not the same vehicle as described in the title.

Often times, these changes occur from damage due to flood, fire, collision, or vandalism.

Obtaining a Salvage Title

Insurance companies make judgments on damaged vehicles to determine whether it is economically feasible to have them fixed. If they decide that a vehicle isn't worth being fixed, either the insurance company or you (as the owner) must obtain a salvage title within 30 days.

To get your title switched to salvage status, bring the original title along with identification to a County Clerk of Courts title office to apply.

If you decide to keep the vehicle and repair it, you will not be allowed to drive it on any highway while it has a salvage title.

Rebuilt Salvage Titles

After you make the necessary repairs to bring your vehicle into working condition, you will need to obtain a rebuilt salvage title.

The first step in this process is to have it inspected at an inspection facility run by the Ohio State Highway Patrol (scroll down that page for addresses).

Before making the inspection appointment, stop by a deputy registrar's branch to pick up an inspection form and pay the required fee. Your clerk will then give you a receipt number. You'll need that number when you are scheduling the appointment to have your vehicle inspected.

The Inspection

Make sure to bring any receipts for repairs and new parts with you to the inspection, along with the salvage title. If you have receipts from private-party sales, they will need to be notarized.

Keep in mind that the purpose of the inspection is to certify the ownership of all the vehicle parts and to review all the required documentation. It is not a judgment on the vehicle's safety, or the quality of work performed.

If your vehicle passes the inspection, take the completed inspection form and your salvage title to a title office and apply for the rebuilt salvage title. Once you obtain that, your vehicle is legal to be driven on highways.

You should also know that if you dismantle, destroy, or change the character of your vehicle so that it no longer is a complete car, you must forfeit your title to the County Clerk of Courts title office. Likewise, if you sell your car to a junk dealer, you must sign over your title to the dealer.

Buyer Beware

Be careful when buying a salvaged or rebuilt salvaged vehicle. Remember, just because a rebuilt salvaged vehicle has passed the state inspection doesn't mean it's safe to drive, or that it won't fall apart (literally) a week after you buy it.