

A salvage vehicle is defined as one that has been damaged, smashed, crashed, or destroyed beyond fair-market or fixable value, and has been deemed a total loss by an insurance company. If the insurance company is not making the assessment, then an individual needs to prove that the loss exceeds 75% of the vehicle's market value.

Vehicles in this state have quite a lengthy history of being at the center of controversy. In many cases, salvage vehicles have spawned illegal activities and sent states into a frenzy trying to close lawbook loopholes.

Generally, this illicit conduct involves reselling salvage vehicles without ever disclosing the vehicle history to the buyer. Without knowledge of a sketchy past, a buyer assumes they are purchasing a vehicle that was not one step from the scrap heap.

The buyer has no negotiating power without having insight to the vehicle's sordid history. Thus a seller has free reign to inflate the price and make a healthy, but not necessarily legal, return.

Possessing a vehicle in this condition requires the owner to apply for a title branded as salvage. If the vehicle ends up in running order once again, the owner has the option of upgrading the branded title by completing an Application for Rebuilt Salvage Decal.

This decal is essential if the reconstructed vehicle in question is going to be resold. To obtain either a title or decal requires a number of important procedures.

Acquiring a Salvage Title

If you have a car that is dented, damaged, banged up, smashed, or just not working, and the cost to fix it is more than 75% of the vehicle's market value, then you need a branded title.

Branded titles, like titles for all vehicles in Wyoming, are handled at the county level by the clerk's office.

You will need to complete a Wyoming application for title. There is not a set application, so it is best to pick up one from the county in which you reside.

If you are applying on your own and are not an insurance company proxy, you will need to turn over the existing vehicle title.

You must provide valid evidence of the damage via a law enforcement accident report or letter from your insurance carrier.

The fee for a branded title is \$9.

The title issued will have one of two words stamped across it: "salvage" or "nonrepairable." If the title is stamped with "nonrepairable," you might as well send the car to the junk yard for scrap, because it will never be allowed as a registered vehicle on the roads of Wyoming.

Wyoming will transfer branded titles for vehicles being brought into the state but carrying salvage titles from elsewhere. Also, if a vehicle is more than eight years old or was used for commercial purposes, then the laws of the salvage titling process do not apply.

Acquiring a Rebuilt Title

To begin with, you need to fill out the Branded Title Disclosure form. It requires you to divulge in detail the prior damage sustained to the vehicle. Then you are required to provide the name and address of the garage or individual that rebuilt the vehicle. Attach a copy of the salvage-branded title and mail the form to:

Motor Vehicle Services
5300 Bishop Blvd.
Cheyenne, WY 82007

After the department investigates and grants the application, you will be mailed a certificate of approval and a decal with the phrase "rebuilt from salvage" on it. You must stick the decal in the spot requested on the certificate. Usually the designated location is inside the driver-side door jamb of the vehicle.

You will then need to have the vehicle inspected by a Wyoming law enforcement officer. The officer will check to make sure the decal is in the proper location, confirm the vehicle identification number (VIN), and evaluate the overall fitness of the vehicle. Call your local county clerk's office for a list of nearby enforcement officers who will perform the inspection.

Take the completed inspection form, along with the original salvage-branded title and the certificate from WYDOT, to your local county clerk's office and trade them in for a title branded "rebuilt from salvage."

The fee for the title is \$9.

At this point, you will now be able to register the vehicle in Wyoming. For further information, check the Wyoming Statutes section on salvage and rebuilt titles: Chapter 31, Title 2, Sections 106-110.