

Many states allow you to rebuild vehicles classified as salvage, getting them in (apparently) roadworthy shape again for possible resale. There is usually a tiered title system put in place to protect a potential buyer from any possible wrongdoing by the seller.

But in New Mexico, you pretty much do not need to worry about buying a vehicle that was brought back from the salvage grave. In this state, a vehicle deemed "nonrepairable" or salvage can only go one place?to the scrap heap. State law prohibits any type of rebuilding or repairing of a salvage vehicle for a return to the road.

Two Options for Salvage Vehicles

Instead, if you have a vehicle in this condition caused from one of a multitude of reasons?from a crash to a natural disaster to the car just being plain old?you are left with only a couple of options.

The first option is the easiest, and perhaps the one some of us have experienced at one time or another. It entails an insurance company judging the vehicle "totaled" and compensating the owner for the loss at a fair market price. From there you will cede the title to the insurance company and be done with the vehicle.

You then need to notify the Motor Vehicle Division (MVD) of the event. As far as the old license plates go, you can either register them on another car within 30 days of the accident or take them into an MVD office for cancellation.

If you choose to forgo the insurance route, you can send the vehicle off to salvage on your own. This is the second way to go. It requires first notifying the MVD of the situation and having your certificate of title branded "salvage." Once the title issue is reconciled, you can sell the nonrepairable vehicle to a licensed dismantler, auto recycler, or wrecker. From here the vehicle can be parted out, scrapped, crushed, or anything but rebuilt and resold.

If you have rebuilt a car yourself from scrap or parts (this is legal as long as it is not all the same salvage-branded car), it will need to have a specialized title.