

Fast Facts 29

Buying a Vehicle From Out of State – Can You Register It in California?



The Bottom Line

If you are a California resident and acquire a new **car, truck, or motorcycle** from another state, it must be certified to meet California smog laws to be registered in California. This includes certain diesel-powered vehicles. The Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) cannot accept an application to register a vehicle in California that does not qualify for registration (*California Health and Safety Code* §§43150 – 43156).

What Is Considered a New Vehicle?

California considers any vehicle with less than 7,500 miles on the odometer at the time of purchase or trade by a California resident or business, to be a **new** vehicle. This is true whether or not the vehicle has been registered in another state.

Aren't All Vehicles California Certified?

Not all new vehicles are manufactured to be sold in California. Many manufacturers make vehicles to be sold only in the other 49 states. These vehicles (**49-state**) are made with smog equipment that meets **federal** emission standards, but not California standards. California-certified (**50-state**) vehicles are made to be sold in California.

Check the Label

To find out whether a car, truck, or motorcycle is California certified, check the emission label under the hood. For a motorcycle, check the frame or refer to your owner's manual for the location. The label should read that the vehicle conforms to California regulations, or that it is legal for sale in California.

Exemptions

There are a few exemptions to the law. As a California resident, you **may be** able to register a **49-state** vehicle if it was:

- Obtained as part of a divorce, inheritance, or legal separation settlement.
- Purchased to replace your California registered vehicle that was stolen while you were using the vehicle out of state.
- Purchased to replace your California registered vehicle that was destroyed or made inoperative beyond reasonable repair while you were using the vehicle out-of-state.
- An emergency vehicle, pursuant to *California Vehicle Code* §§27156.2 and 27156.3.
- Registered by you in the state of your last active military service outside California.
- A street motorcycle or motor-driven cycle year model 2005 and older, with an engine less than 50 cubic centimeters (cc) displacement. Beginning January 1, 2006, street motorcycles and motor-driven cycles year model 2006 and newer, with engines less than 50 cc displacement, require an emission label certifying them to meet U.S. Environmental Protection Agency emission regulations, and may be registered regardless of mileage.

50-State/California Certified

IMPORTANT VEHICLE INFORMATION	
MOTOR CORPORATION	
TEST GROUP : 2TYX034FFP SFI, A.F. 3, TWC(2), HC2S	EVAP. FAMILY : 2TYXR0135AK0 3.4 LITER
ENGINE TUNE-UP SPECIFICATIONS FOR ALL ALTITUDES	
VALVE CLEARANCE (INTAKE)	0.13-0.23mm (0.006-0.009 in.)
(ENGINE AT COLD) EXHAUST	0.27-0.37mm (0.011-0.014 in.)
NO OTHER ADJUSTMENTS NEEDED.	
THIS VEHICLE CONFORMS TO U.S. EPA NLEV REGULATIONS APPLICABLE TO GASOLINE-FUELED 2002 MODEL YEAR NEW LEV LIGHT-DUTY TRUCKS AND TO CALIFORNIA REGULATIONS APPLICABLE TO 2002 MODEL YEAR NEW LEV LIGHT-DUTY TRUCKS.	

VEHICLE EMISSION CONTROL INFORMATION	
MOTOR CORPORATION	
ENGINE FAMILY : XTYX032YBA EVAP. FAMILY : XTYXR0135AK1	SFI, EGR, HC2S (2), TWC 2.2 LITER
ENGINE TUNE-UP SPECIFICATIONS FOR ALL ALTITUDES	
VALVE CLEARANCE (INTAKE)	0.19-0.29 mm (0.007-0.011 in.)
(ENGINE AT COLD) EXHAUST	0.28-0.38 mm (0.011-0.015 in.)
NO OTHER ADJUSTMENTS NEEDED.	
THIS VEHICLE CONFORMS TO U.S. EPA REGULATIONS APPLICABLE TO GASOLINE-FUELED 1999 MODEL YEAR NEW PASSENGER CARS PROVIDED THAT THIS VEHICLE IS NOT SOLD OR DELIVERED TO AN ULTIMATE PURCHASER FOR PRINCIPAL USE IN THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA OR A STATE THAT HAS ADOPTED CALIFORNIA STANDARDS UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF SECTION 177 OF THE CLEAN AIR ACT AND THOSE STANDARDS ARE IN EFFECT.	
CATALYST	
OBD I CERTIFIED	
3 4 2 P G F F W	
) 5VZ-FE VZN USA & CANADA TM	
7M01 2 2 V A G X B Y	
5S-FE FED & CANADA	
FD	

49-State Emissions

Does This Apply to Someone Moving to California?

If you are moving to California from another state, you may register a new **49-state** vehicle if it was first registered by you in your home state, or for military personnel, in the last state of your military service. When applying for vehicle registration in California, you must provide evidence that the vehicle was registered.

Vehicles Purchased From Out of the Country (Grey Market)

California has special requirements for vehicles imported from other countries (including Canada and Mexico). It may be very costly or impossible to modify these vehicles to meet California emission requirements and/or federal motor vehicle safety standards (FMVSS). No direct import vehicle less than two years old can be converted to California emission standards. Not all direct import vehicles over two years old can be converted to California emission standards and FMVSS. No motorcycle or diesel-powered vehicle can be converted to California emission standards. For details, contact the California Air Resources Board (CARB).

Drive Clean

Are you looking to reduce your carbon footprint, save money on gas, or just contribute less to smog? **DriveClean.ca.gov** is California's buying guide for clean and efficient vehicles. Since motor vehicles are responsible for more than half of the smog and global warming pollution in California, the vehicle you buy directly impacts air quality, global warming, and energy security.

Visit **DriveClean.ca.gov** for more information about the Environmental Performance Label, to compare scores, and to find the latest incentives.

For More Information on

- California residency and vehicle importation laws and requirements, visit DMV online at **dmv.ca.gov** or call the DMV Technical Compliance Section at (916) 657-6795.
- California Smog Check program, visit the Bureau of Automotive Repair (BAR) online at **smogcheck.ca.gov** or call 1-800-952-5210.
- California smog laws, grey-market vehicles, and 49-state vehicles, visit CARB online at **arb.ca.gov** or call 1-800-242-4450.
- Off-highway vehicle registration, see the *How To: Register an Off-Highway Vehicle* (HTVR 19) brochure at **dmv.ca.gov**.