

Reporting the Sale or Transfer of Your Car

Introduction

This publication answers questions about how to protect yourself from being held responsible for the actions of another person after you have sold or transferred your car.

It talks about laws in state statutes, state administrative regulations, and case law. If you want to do more research, a list of some sale/transfer laws are at the end of this publication.

You can call the Department of Licensing at 360-902-3770, contact your local auto licensing office, or visit the Department web site (www.dol.wa.gov) if you have further questions.

What do I need to do after I have sold or transferred my car?

1. Give away your ownership of the car by signing the title (vehicle certificate of ownership) and giving the title to the new owner.¹ If your car is less than 10 years old, also fill out the odometer disclosure statement on the back side of the title.²
2. Give a Report of Sale to the Department of Licensing WITHIN FIVE DAYS, not counting Saturdays, Sundays, or state and federal holidays.³ Failure to file this report on time can result in criminal or civil responsibility for the operation of the car after you have sold or transferred it.⁴
3. Make sure the Department of Licensing has your current address—if you move and do not update your address, you may not receive notices from a court or a towing company, may not learn that you are being held responsible for the actions of others after you sold or transferred your car, and may lose the chance to fix a mistake.

Can I submit a Report of Sale after the five business days as stated in the report of sale law?

Yes, but a report of sale that is filed late could be considered improperly filed.

File your Report of Sale on time to protect yourself from parking tickets, towing charges, and accidents that may happen after you sell or transfer your car.

How do I report the sale or transfer of my car?

Take the Report of Sale to your local auto licensing office (a list of licensing offices is available online at <https://www2.wa.gov/dol/vsagents/>). A detachable report of sale form comes with the “certificate of ownership” (title) to your car. You can also get a form at

any auto licensing office, use the attached form, or report the sale of your car online at <https://fortress.wa.gov/dol/rosprod/>.

If you submit your Report of Sale personally, you get a receipt that gives you all the information you need to show a court or a towing company that you have properly reported the sale or transfer of your car. If you file your Report of Sale using the Department of Licensing website, save or print out the receipt.

Do not mail your Report of Sale to the Department of Licensing in Olympia. You do not receive a receipt and you take your chances with the postal service.

Is there a charge for filing a Report of Sale?

There is no charge if you report the sale or transfer of your car using the Internet. It costs \$4.00 to report in person or by mail.

What information do I need to provide on the Report of Sale?

The Report of Sale must have the following information:

- your name and address
- the date you sold or transferred your car
- the name and address of the buyer/transferee
- the sale price or listed as a gift or trade
- a description of your car including its vehicle identification number (VIN) and license plate number.

If you cannot provide the information required above, your Report of Sale could be considered improperly filed.

Do I need to file a Report of Sale if I gave the car away or traded it with no money being exchanged?

Yes. Any time you give your car away, donate it, trade it in to a car dealer, or trade it to a private party, you should file a Report of Sale.

Check the “gift/trade” box on the report of sale form if you are using the Internet to report. Write in “gift” or “trade” in the box marked “purchase price” on the Report of Sale form if reporting in person.

Do I need to file a Report of Sale if the car was awarded to another person in a court order?

Yes. Report the transfer as a gift or trade. (See above.)

Should I file a Report of Sale if the car was sold to a wrecking yard or sold for parts?

Yes.

If I have sold my vehicle and the buyer is making payments, when should I file a Report of Sale?

You must still file your Report of Sale WITHIN FIVE DAYS from the date of sale.

You and the buyer should go to your local auto licensing office together. Take the title (certificate of ownership) with you.

- First: you should file your Report of Sale.
- Second: your buyer should apply to be the car's registered owner.
- Third: you and the buyer should apply for a new title that says the buyer is the registered owner and you are the legal owner.⁵

The Department will issue a new title (certificate of ownership). The new title will be sent to you.

After the buyer has made the required payments, take the title to your local auto licensing office and have your name removed as the legal owner.

Since my name will still appear as the legal owner of the car until the buyer has made the required payments, will I be responsible for parking tickets or towing charges that happen while I am listed as the legal owner?

No. You are not legally responsible for parking tickets if you properly reported the sale of your car. If your buyer became the registered owner of the car at the same time you reported its sale, there is little chance that you will be mistakenly given a ticket that isn't yours.

However, you and your buyer will both receive a notice from a towing company if the car has been towed.⁶ The towing company sends you a notice not because you are considered to have been responsible for the car getting towed, but because you are the legal owner. Sending you a notice gives you the chance to pay the towing company's charges to get the car back if your buyer will not pay.⁷ (You might want to do since the car is your security for the buyer's payments.)

If you don't want to pay to get the car back, you will not be responsible for any additional charges if the car is sold and the towing company is still owed money.⁸

What should I do if I receive charges for towing or parking tickets that are not mine?

Show your Report of Sale receipt to the towing company or the court where the parking ticket was issued.⁹

If you do not have a receipt, you may request a copy of your Report of Sale from the Department of Licensing with a Vehicle/Vessel Disclosure Request.

You can get a Vehicle/Vessel Disclosure Request form:

- on the Internet at <http://www.dol.wa.gov/forms/420531.pdf>
- by calling the Department of Licensing at 360-902-3770 (Option 3, then Option 2) and asking that a request form be mailed to you.
- at SOME local auto licensing offices. (Please note: local auto licensing offices do NOT process the requests.)

Mail the completed form to the address listed on the form. There is no charge unless 6 or more documents are requested. The Department of Licensing has 5 working days to respond.

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This publication provides general information concerning your rights and responsibilities. It is not intended as a substitute for specific legal advice. This information is current as of the date of its printing, November 2007.

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¹ Do not give up your interest in the car and deliver the title to the new owner if the new owner is making payments. See the “If I have sold my car and the buyer is making payments, when should I file a Report of Sale” section of this publication.

² [RCW 46.12.124](#)

³ [RCW 46.12.101\(1\)](#)

⁴ [RCW 46.12.102](#)

⁵ The details of the payment agreement you have with the buyer is a separate agreement that you have with the buyer and is not a part of the Report of Sale process.

⁶ [RCW 46.55.110](#)

⁷ [RCW 46.55.120](#)

⁸ [RCW 46.55.140](#)

⁹ If your car has been abandoned and towed away after you sold or transferred it, you will not be guilty of the traffic infraction of “littering – abandoned vehicle” and you will not be responsible for costs incurred in removing, storing, and disposing of it, if you have properly filed a Report of Sale or transfer. [RCW 46.55.105 \(4\)](#). See also [RCW 46.63.140](#).

Vehicle Report of Sale

If you are the seller of a vehicle, you must release interest by signing the Vehicle Certificate of Ownership (Title) and giving it to the buyer.

Complete and file a Vehicle Report of Sale within five business days of selling, trading, gifting, or disposing of your vehicle. This can help protect you from certain civil liabilities if the new owner does not transfer the title. You can file online at www.InternetTabs.wa.gov, free of charge, or at your local vehicle licensing office for a small fee.

Visit our website at www.dol.wa.gov for more information.

Name of seller/transferor (current registered owner)				Name of buyer/transferee		
Complete address of seller/transferor				Complete address of buyer/transferee		
City		State	ZIP code	City		State ZIP code
Date vehicle sold	Today's date	Sale price		Buyer/transferee's driver license number (if available)		
License number	Vehicle identification number (VIN)		Year	Make	Model	Certificate number

A person who files a Vehicle Report of Sale without the knowledge of the buyer/transferee is guilty of fraudulent filing and may be punished under state law 9.45 RCW.