

Importing

a motor vehicle

This factsheet should be read in conjunction with Factsheets 44a and 44b.

New Zealand allows the import of new and used vehicles, provided the vehicle meets applicable standards, safety and emissions requirements. There must also be acceptable proof of entitlement to the vehicle and standards compliance. These things are checked in the process known as entry certification. Entry certifiers are appointed by the NZ Transport Agency to carry out this task.

Warning

Although the word 'import' is used here there are in fact few controls on the importation of vehicles. Controls under Land Transport Rules only apply to whether vehicles may be used on public roads or not. You may legally import any type of vehicle if it is for public display or for use on private roads or off road. A vehicle may also be broken up for parts after it arrives or re-exported. For this reason the New Zealand Customs Service and shipping agents do not restrict the entry of vehicles and are not required to provide advice on entry certification requirements.

Note: release of a vehicle by the Customs Service after arrival in New Zealand is not proof that you will be able to register the vehicle for use on public roads in New Zealand.

Entry certification is the same whether the used vehicle is imported for sale or for the personal use of the owner.

We recommend you contact an entry certifier before shipping the vehicle.

This will allow you to:

- ship the vehicle to a port where an entry certifier is available, or
- arrange to have the vehicle transported from the port of entry to an entry certifier.

Note: make sure you check your paperwork, and that the VIN, chassis and frame numbers are correct, as vehicles without correct paperwork may not be able to be registered.

Government departments

All used vehicles entering New Zealand for the first time must go through a border check, Customs inspection and entry certification before they can be used on the road.

Three government departments are involved:

- The Transport Agency enforces New Zealand's vehicle standards law as part of the entry certification process, www.nzta.govt.nz.

- NZ Customs Service (Customs) checks import requirements such as import tax or duty (for more information see their website at www.customs.govt.nz).
- The Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) checks for biosecurity, eg the presence of any insects or mud on or in the vehicle.

What are the main processes?

MPI and Customs clearance

When a vehicle arrives in New Zealand the MPI carries out a quarantine inspection followed by Customs clearance.

Border inspection (structural)

This is carried out by Transport Agency-appointed border inspection organisations. The importer must contact a Transport Agency-approved structural inspection provider to make suitable arrangements for the border inspection to be done before Customs clearance. The Transport Agency-approved structural inspection providers' details are:

IVS

Contact person - Mandy Tepania
Programme Co-ordinator
Phone: 0800 021 169 Fax: 0800 738 724
Email: inspections@ivsltd.co.nz
Web: <http://www.ivslimited.co.nz/Services/Vehicle-Inspection-Services>

NZBS (NZ) Ltd

Contact Person - Bevan Jones
Phone: 027 230 7184
Fax: 09 447 1997
Email: bevan.jones@biosecurity.net.nz
Web: www.biosecurity.co.nz

Automotive Technologies Ltd

Contact person - Nigel Grindall
Phone: +81 3 6868 7600
Email: n.grindall@atlinpections.com
Web: www.atlinpections.com

JEVIC NZ Office

Contact person - Euan Philpot
New Zealand Manager
Phone: 09 966 1779
Email: euan.philpot@jevic.co.nz

KMA (NZ) Ltd

Contact person - Kevin Nalder
Mobile: 021 480 660 Phone: 09 366 7147
Fax: 09 366 7145
Email: admin@kmainspections.com
Web: www.kmainspections.com

Autoterminal Japan Ltd

Contact Person – Mamoru Fujie
Japan Phone No: 080 1458 8320 or 078 805 2447
Japan Fax No: 078 805 2448 or 078 805 2750
Email: mfujie@autoterminal.co.jp
Web: www.autoterminal.co.jp

The service within New Zealand is currently provided by two independent providers – NZBS (NZ) Ltd and Independent Verification Services Limited (IVS). The Transport Agency's off-shore inspections are carried out by Automotive Technologies Ltd, JEVIC and by KMA's joint venture partner Autoterminal Japan Ltd (ATJ).

Once the inspector has completed his/her structural inspection a pink Transport Agency sticker (below) will be applied to the driver's side windscreen wiper arm of the vehicle. The vehicle can be released when both the Transport Agency and the MPI biosecurity inspection stickers are affixed to the vehicle.

The pink sticker:



VIN

The vehicle identification number (VIN) is issued/decoded as soon as practicable by the entry certifier.

Entry certification process

An entry certifier:

- verifies that the vehicle met the required safety and emissions standards when manufactured
- inspects the vehicle to check it is in good condition
- decides whether the vehicle needs any repairs and/or specialist certification
- certifies the vehicle for compliance with the safety and emissions requirements
- issues an *Application to register a motor vehicle form (MR2A)* and a warrant or certificate of fitness
- invoices the importer for the cost of certification.

Registration and licensing

Once the agent of the Transport Agency has registered and licensed the vehicle it can be driven legally on New Zealand roads. You will need to have the correct driver licence, and the vehicle will need an in-service inspection (for a warrant or certificate of fitness) at regular intervals. If it is a commercial vehicle you will need to have a transport service licence.

What classes of vehicle must be entry-certified?

The entry certification processes apply to mopeds, motorcycles, cars, off-road passenger vehicles, vans, utes, minibuses and heavy vehicles. They do not apply to low-powered vehicles, or to Classes TA and TB (light trailers). Older vehicles, pre-1990, only need to meet some of the standards.

The vehicle classes fit into two groups, light vehicles and heavy vehicles, depending on the gross vehicle mass (GVM) which is the maximum allowable weight specified by the manufacturer.

As of 1 July 2011 class LA and LB (mopeds) required entry certification.

Light vehicles (GVM not exceeding 3500kg):

- Classes LA and LB mopeds
- Classes LC, LD, LE (motorcycles)
- Class MA (passenger car up to and including 9 seats)
- Classes MB, MC (forward-control or off-road passenger vehicle, up to and including 9 seats)
- Class NA (light goods vehicle)
- Classes MD1, MD2 (light buses more than 9 seats).

Heavy vehicles (GVM exceeding 3500kg):

- Classes MD3, MD4, ME (heavy buses)
- Classes NB, NC (heavy trucks)
- Classes TC, TD (heavy trailers).

What documentation must be provided?

Entitlement to vehicle

You must provide evidence that you're lawfully entitled to the possession of the vehicle. You'll need original documents (faxed or photocopied documents are not sufficient), establishing a link to the last owner (eg deregistration papers, certificate of registration, invoices, bills of sale, receipts etc). You'll need certified translations of any documents that are not in English.

Standards requirements

You must provide proof that the vehicle you wish to import was manufactured to meet approved safety and emissions standards. These requirements depend on the class of vehicle, the date of manufacture, and the country from which the vehicle is being imported (ie proof it was legally on road there).

In the absence of other proof, you might need a *Statement of compliance* from an authorised representative of the vehicle's manufacturer, listing the standards to which the vehicle was certified when it was made, particularly if you need to prove frontal-impact standard compliance.

Contact an entry certifier

The organisations listed below are appointed by the Transport Agency as entry certifiers. They are selected branches of:

- **Automobile Association (AA)**
phone: 0800 500 333
email: aatech@aa.co.nz
website: www.aa.co.nz
- **Vehicle Inspection New Zealand (VINZ)**
phone: 0800 468 469
email: info@vinz.co.nz
website: www.vinz.co.nz
- **Vehicle Testing New Zealand (VTNZ)**
phone: 0800 88 88 69
email: technical@vtnz.co.nz
website: www.vtnz.co.nz

- **Drivesure Vehicle Testing Ltd**
phone: 0800 220 240
email: admin@drivesure.net.nz
website: www.drivesure.net.nz
- **Nelson Vehicle Testing Centre Ltd**
phone: 03 539 1223
email: office@nvtc.co.nz

Contact the manufacturer's representative in New Zealand

You'll need to do this if the import status of the motor vehicle is difficult to determine. See the MIA list on the Transport Agency website at www.nzta.govt.nz.

Other contacts

- **New Zealand Customs Service**
<http://www.customs.govt.nz/default.htm>
- **Ministry for Primary Industries**
<http://www.mpi.govt.nz/mafnet/index.htm>

Related Factsheets:

- Factsheet 44a *Immigrants' vehicles.*
- Factsheet 44b *Special interest vehicles.*
- Factsheet 12 *Importing a left-hand drive vehicle.*
- Factsheet 35 *Importing a vehicle temporarily.*
- Factsheet 6 *Vehicle identification numbers.*

Questions and answers

What about hybrids and electric vehicles?

If you wish to import a hybrid vehicle or a plug-in electric hybrid vehicle you must be able to show it has been certified to meet the appropriate emissions and safety standards, just as you would for a petrol or diesel vehicle. You will also need to provide fuel consumption information if it is a light vehicle, other than a moped or motorcycle. A battery electric (powered wholly by electricity) vehicle will need to meet the appropriate safety standards, but not the emissions or fuel consumption requirements.

What is checked at the border inspection?

A border inspector records:

- the vehicle's identity (VIN or chassis number, make, model)
- the identity of the importer of the vehicle
- the odometer reading at the time of the check
- any obvious significant water damage, structural damage or deterioration
- whether the vehicle is a left-hand drive.

The border inspection organisation (BIO) sends the information to the Transport Agency's Palmerston North Office for recording on the Motor Vehicle Register. Allow 48 hours for the information to be recorded.

The BIO invoices the importer for each vehicle, to cover the cost of the structural border inspection.

Sometimes BIOs at facilities in the UK and Japan carry out the border check. In this case, a vehicle doesn't need to undergo the check again in New Zealand.

What happens if the vehicle is damaged or deteriorated?

If the vehicle is identified by the BIO as being water damaged, structurally damaged or deteriorated, this is recorded on the Motor Vehicle Register and a label is put on the vehicle to show it is structurally damaged. You might decide repairs are not justified and look for alternative uses for the vehicle, eg for parts. (Do not remove the damage-flag sticker or repair the vehicle until it has been inspected by either an entry certification agent or a repair certifier.)

What does the New Zealand Customs Service require?

After the border check, the vehicle must clear Customs (the New Zealand Customs Service). They hold the vehicle until all Customs requirements are met. Contact Customs for details and costs. If you don't want to arrange the border inspection and Customs processes yourself, you may wish to contact a Customs broker (listed in telephone directories and on the internet).

Some vehicles may be classed by Customs as prohibited imports (eg because of tampering with the odometer). As a condition of import approval, Customs may impose a requirement that the vehicle be sold for parts. If this happens, the vehicle cannot be registered for use on the road.

How do I get the vehicle to the entry certifier?

After clearing Customs, the vehicle is released to the importer. However, it cannot be driven on the road yet.

- Dealers and repairers who have the right to use a trade plate may drive an uncertified vehicle on a conditional permit (an Annex B) before taking it to an entry certifier.
- If you're a private importer, however, you will need to have the vehicle transported to an entry certifier by other means (eg on a trailer, transported or towed).

How is the VIN obtained?

Some vehicles already have a VIN when entering New Zealand. It is the vehicle owner's responsibility to provide the information (available from the vehicle manufacturer) that enables the VIN to be decoded, when necessary. If the vehicle doesn't have a VIN, it is verified through other vehicle identifiers (such as the chassis number) and the entry certifier issues it with a VIN. The VIN is recorded in the Motor Vehicle Register so the vehicle can be tracked through the certification and registration process.

Where can I find samples of acceptable documentation?

Samples of acceptable documents from Europe, USA, Japan, Australia and certain other countries are provided in the reference material of the *Vehicle inspection requirements manual: Entry certification* and in the section for importers on our website.

What is the certification process for water or structurally damaged, or deteriorated vehicles?

There is an additional process for light vehicles to check for structural damage or repair. Water or structural damage, or deterioration to a vehicle may have been recorded at the border check or could be discovered later, by the entry certifier. The vehicle may need to be repaired before it can be certified for registration.

The entry certifier is responsible for deciding whether a specialist repair certifier needs to inspect any repairs that were carried out before the vehicle was imported, to ensure they have been done correctly. This could involve some disassembly and additional costs for you.

You will need to pay the costs of repair and repair certification, as well as the cost of entry certification. The Transport Agency suggests you check the cost of repairs and certification before you proceed any further. The cost of this certification varies according to the level of certification required.

A vehicle that is so severely damaged that it is unsuitable for registration, or has been badly repaired, will not be given a repair certificate or an MR2A form. It will be released to you and may not, by law, be registered or driven on the road in New Zealand until it meets all legal requirements.

Do not have the vehicle repaired until it has been inspected by an entry certifier or a repair certifier. Failure to do so may result in the repair having to be redone.

What about 'historic' vehicles?

If the vehicle you have imported is to be restored, under no circumstances should you remove a vehicle identifier (chassis/VIN number), as removal and reattachment may prohibit the certification of the vehicle. Ensure that a repair certifier is consulted prior to undertaking any corrosion or accident-damage repairs.

What is the process for modified vehicles?

If a light vehicle is significantly modified, the entry certifier must send it to a low volume vehicle (LVV) certifier for specialist certification. There will be a charge to you for this, in addition to the cost of entry certification. The LVV certifier will inspect the vehicle and issue it with a modification plate before it is returned to the entry certifier.

If a heavy vehicle is modified it will require inspection and certification from a specialist heavy-vehicle certifier. See the *Vehicle inspection requirements manual: Heavy vehicle specialist certification* on our website.

What should I do if I disagree with a decision made by the entry certifier?

Register your complaint with the head office of the entry certifier, which will investigate the complaint. If you're not satisfied with the result of the investigation, you can request a review by the Transport Agency.

How long does certification, registration and licensing take?

Once the information from the border check is in the Motor Vehicle Register (which could take up to 48 hours), and provided everything is in order, the certification process and registration and licensing could take as little as one day. However, if the entry certifier encounters problems in certifying the vehicle (eg if specialist certification is required), the certification process will take longer.

What are the costs involved in the entire process?

The costs are set by the individual organisations that carry out the work. It is currently estimated that the total cost for a vehicle to undergo the quarantine inspection and border check, clear Customs, be issued with a VIN, be certified for registration and be registered and licensed is approximately NZ\$800 to NZ\$1000. This does not include the goods and services tax (GST) payable to New Zealand Customs on the value of the vehicle, or the cost of any repairs or repair certification.

Immigrants arriving for the first time in New Zealand may be able to import a vehicle without paying GST if they satisfy the New Zealand Customs Service that they're taking up permanent residence, have owned and used the vehicle for at least one year and agree that they will continue to use the vehicle for at least two years.

Entry certifiers charge different rates, but an indicative cost to have a vehicle issued with a VIN and certified for registration purposes is NZ\$450. Repairers, repair certifiers and LVV certifiers also charge different rates and their costs will depend on the work required for each vehicle.

The costs for registration and licensing vary according to vehicle type, engine size, the period of the licence (ie six or 12 months) and what the vehicle will be used for. A full schedule of these costs is available from the Transport Agency. Call our contact centre on 0800 108 809.

Where you can find out more

- Email us: info@nzta.govt.nz.
- From within New Zealand, phone: 0800 699 000.
- From outside New Zealand, phone: +64 4 931 8700.
- Write to us: NZ Transport Agency, Private Bag 11777, Palmerston North 4442.

The information in this factsheet is a general guide only. It is not the source of the law and should not be used in place of authoritative legal documents. Some factsheets are updated frequently and print versions can quickly become out of date. If the currency of the information you are reading is important, check the factsheet index on our website (www.nzta.govt.nz/factsheets) or call us on 0800 699 000.

Contact details

- Call our contact centre: 0800 699 000.
- Visit our website: www.nzta.govt.nz.
- Email us: info@nzta.govt.nz.
- Write to us: NZ Transport Agency, Private Bag 11777, Palmerston North 4442.