

# Chapter O

## Tow/Recovery Vehicles

For general information about tow/recovery vehicles, call DMV at (503) 945-5000.

A person needs a towing business certificate and registration if the person ([ORS 822.200](#)):

- Engages in the towing or recovering of vehicles by any means for any direct or indirect compensation, when the vehicle being towed or recovered is owned by a person other than the person performing the towing or recovery activity.
- Engages in the towing or recovering by any means, as a part of any business operation of the person, vehicles that are wrecked, damaged, disabled, or abandoned or
- Purports in any way to be engaged in the business of performing activities described in subsection (1) of [ORS 822.200](#).

*“Purports...to be engaged in” means to solicit or advertise towing services through the telephone book, business directory, newspaper, radio, television, posting on vehicles, signs, business, billboards, or by any other means. ([OAR 735-154-0000](#))*

When registered with DMV, the business certificate and the registration are used together and expire at the same time.

When registered with MCTD, the MCTD registration and DMV business certificate are issued separately and may expire on different dates.

If the tow vehicle is leased, the lessee (not the lessor) must qualify for tow/recovery registration and be shown on the title as the lessee. This is true whether the vehicle is registered with DMV or MCTD.

Tow/recovery vehicles may tow unregistered vehicles. The vehicle being towed does not need registration or a trip permit.

**Note:** Tow/recovery vehicles cannot be renewed online through DMV’s Online Registration Renewal Program or at DEQ.

### City or county regulations

A city or county may, by charter or ordinance, further regulate towing businesses. ([ORS 822.230](#))

### Insurance

Instead of liability insurance for registration as required under [ORS Chapter 806](#), owners of tow/ recovery vehicles must maintain the type and amounts of insurance required for motor carriers under [ORS Chapter 825](#). If customers have questions about insurance requirements under [Chapter 825](#), they may call the Oregon Tow Truck Association at (503) 324-9401. Owners must also maintain an additional \$50,000 cargo insurance coverage, unless the owners only tow or recover vehicles they own. ([ORS 822.205](#)).

Applicants for tow registration are required to provide a certificate of insurance showing that the applicant is insured by a policy which provides the minimum amount and limits of coverage required under [ORS Chapter 825](#) and [ORS 822.205](#). The certificate must include

the policy number and should include the Vehicle Identification Number. The insurance company must provide DMV written notice of cancellation of the policy and will continue to be liable under the policy until the department receives the written notice or until the cancellation date specified in the written notice, whichever is later. The certificate of insurance must be presented at the time of initial registration and at each renewal.

## **DEQ**

Tow/recovery vehicles within the Portland Area Vehicle Inspection Program Boundary or Medford Area Vehicle Inspection Program Boundary in Jackson County are subject to DEQ testing. Prorated vehicles are exempt from DEQ testing. For more information about DEQ, see [Chapter K](#).

The customer must submit a completed Application for Tow or Recovery Vehicle Certificate, [Form 735-387](#), for each vehicle. A [Form 735-226](#) or [Form 735-268](#), is also required if the title is being transferred or the vehicle is registered with DMV.

The title and business certificate must always be issued in the same name.

The business certificate is valid for one year from the last day of the month in which the original certificate was issued.

Both the registration and business certificate must be current to operate as a tow/recovery vehicle.

When completing a Form 735-387, all applicable boxes and spaces must be completed. See example of Form 735-387 below.

**Note:** Tow/recovery vehicles cannot be renewed online through DMV's Online Registration Renewal Program or at DEQ.

DMV TITLE AND REGISTRATION HANDBOOK  
 Chapter O: Tow/Recovery Vehicles

Example of APPLICATION FOR TOW OR RECOVERY VEHICLE BUSINESS CERTIFICATE, FORM 735-387

Actual size 8½" x 11"

 <b>Application for Tow or Recovery Vehicle Business Certificate</b>						REMARKS
<p><b>INSTRUCTIONS:</b> This application is for a Tow Business Certificate and Tow Plates only. Complete Lines 1 through 8 and sign on Line 9. Send the completed form and fees to: DMV, 1905 Lana Ave. NE, Salem, OR 97314. You also must register your vehicle with DMV or Motor Carrier Transportation Division (MCTD).</p>						
<p><b>Please read the additional instructions and regulations below and on the back of this form.</b></p>						
<p><b>TOW BUSINESS CERTIFICATE:</b> A Tow Business Certificate is required for each tow or recovery vehicle operated on Oregon highways. The fee is \$17 and the certificate is valid for one year from the date of application. A fee for original tow identification plates is also required. The vehicle must be titled in the same name as listed on Line 4 of this form. You are also required to register with either DMV or MCTD.</p>						
<p><b>WHERE TO REGISTER A TOW OR RECOVERY VEHICLE:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You must register with DMV if your tow/recovery vehicle has a combined weight of 26,000 pounds or less and is not proportionally registered (prorate) for operation in other states. "Combined weight" means the loaded weight of your vehicle plus the loaded weight of any vehicle towed or recovered. Contact DMV at (503) 945-5000 if you have any questions.</li> <li>You must register with MCTD if the combined weight of your tow/recovery vehicle is more than 26,000 pounds. You also may need to register with MCTD on a proportional basis if you operate your tow vehicle in Oregon and other states. Contact MCTD at (503) 378-6699 for more information on registering with MCTD.</li> </ul>						
VEHICLE DESCRIPTION						
TRANS CODE	MP	EX	FORM #	DATE/ISSUE/RECEIPT #	SALE CODE	
<b>1</b>	NEW PLATE #	STITCH #	VEHICLE IDENTIFICATION NUMBER (VIN)		OREGON TITLE #	
<b>2</b>	PRESENT PLATE #	EXPIRATION DATE	YEAR	MAKE	REGISTERED WEIGHT	COMBINED WEIGHT
<b>3</b>	<p><b>Check One:</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Check here if the vehicle will be registered with MCTD. <input type="checkbox"/> Check here if the vehicle will be registered with DMV. An Application for Registration and required fees must be attached.					<b>\$17</b> BUSINESS CERTIFICATE FEE
<b>4</b>	REGISTERED OWNER / BUSINESS NAME (AS SHOWN ON TITLE)		DOB / EIT / CUSTOMER #	DATE OF BIRTH		
<b>5</b>	REGISTERED OWNER / BUSINESS ADDRESS (NUMBER, STREET, CITY, STATE, ZIP CODE)					TOTAL FEE
INSURANCE INFORMATION						
<b>6</b>	NAME OF GARAGE/INSURANCE COMPANY (NOT AGENT)			INSURANCE POLICY NUMBER		
<b>7</b>	NAME OF GARAGE/INSURANCE COMPANY (NOT AGENT)			GARAGE POLICY NUMBER		
THE ADDRESS WHERE THE VEHICLE MAY BE INSPECTED						
<b>8</b>	STREET ADDRESS		CITY	COUNTY	TELEPHONE # ( )	
<p>The owner must certify by completing all applicable statements and sign the <i>Application for Tow or Recovery Vehicle Business Certificate</i>. Under Oregon law it is a crime to knowingly affirm falsely to any matter relating to the regulation of towing businesses (ORS 822.605). The offense is a Class C felony, punishable by a jail sentence of 5 years, a fine of up to \$100,000, or both.</p> <p>I certify that: 1) I comply with insurance requirements for this vehicle and will continue to comply with these requirements until the registration expires or I sell the vehicle; 2) The vehicle meets all safety standards required by Oregon Administrative Rules; 3) I am the registered owner or an authorized representative; 4) All information on this application is accurate; 5) The vehicle shall be used exclusively as described in ORS 822.210; and 6) If applying for DMV registration, the vehicle's combined weight is less than 26,001 pounds and is not subject to Oregon's weight-mile tax.</p>						
<b>9</b>	SIGNATURE		TITLE	TELEPHONE # ( )		
VALIDATION				COURT DATE STAMP / INITIALS		

## Determining how to register tow/recovery vehicles

Tow/recovery vehicles with a **combined** weight over 26,000 pounds are subject to the Oregon weight-mile tax and must register with MCTD. If the combined weight is 26,000 pounds or less, it is not subject to the tax, and it must be registered with DMV. (Prorating a vehicle is an option the customer has whether the vehicle is subject to the weight-mile tax or not.)

DMV registration fees are based on **registration** weight and not **combined** weight. Therefore, when determining whether the vehicle needs to be registered with DMV or MCTD, the combined weight must first be determined.

Any questions concerning MCTD or prorate requirements should be addressed to Motor Carrier Transportation Division, 550 Capitol St. NE, Salem OR 97310. The phone number is **(503) 378-6699**.

## Registration weight for tow/recovery vehicles

To determine whether to register with DMV or MCTD and to determine registration weight, use the following information:

**COMBINED WEIGHT** is the empty weight of all vehicles in a combination plus the weight of the load carried on that combination of vehicles.

**REGISTRATION WEIGHT** of a tow vehicle is the weight of the tow truck equipped for service. Do not include the weight of the vehicle being towed unless the tow vehicle is towing a "heavy trailer." (A "heavy trailer" is a trailer which has a loaded weight of more than 8,000 pounds. "Heavy trailer" does not include campers, travel trailer, special use trailers, or fixed load vehicles.) If the tow vehicle is towing above its registration weight, a registration weight trip permit is needed.

There is one situation where the weight of the trailer and its load is not included in the registration weight of the tow/recovery vehicle, nor would a registration weight trip permit be required. This is if the tow/recovery vehicle is towing a truck and trailer combination, the truck being towed is currently registered, and the registration weight of the trailer and trailer load is included in that truck's registration weight.

## Certificate fees

All tow/recovery vehicles must have a tow business certificate. The fee for the business certificate is \$17 and is renewed annually. See [Chapter M](#) regarding additional registration fees.

## Plates issued and plate fees

Tow/recovery vehicles, including prorated tow/recovery vehicles, are issued plates with a "TW" prefix. All "TW" plates are issued from DMV headquarters in Salem.

The plate fee is charged each time a tow plate is issued to vehicles registered with DMV or that are prorated or registered with MCTD. The plate fee and a replacement plate fee are charged for all tow replacement plates issued. See [Chapter M](#) regarding plate fees.

## Registration and tow/recovery card

If the vehicle is registered by DMV, the registration card is combined with the Tow Business Certificate and is identified as the “Tow Recovery Certificate/Registration Card.”

If registered with MCTD, a “Tow Business Certificate” is issued by DMV, and a separate registration card is issued by MCTD.

## Surrender of “TW” plates

TW plates are nontransferable. When a tow vehicle is sold, transferred, wrecked, or taken out of service as a tow/recovery vehicle, the certificate and TW plates must be surrendered to DMV.

Any new owner must apply for an original tow business certificate and plates.

## Prorated tow/recovery vehicles

Prorated tow vehicles register through the Prorate Section at MCTD. MCTD issues registration plates and DMV issues the TW plates and the business certificate. Prorated vehicles may title in Oregon or another state.

For information on obtaining prorated registration, call MCTD at (503) 378-6699.

For information on obtaining a business certificate for a prorated vehicle, call DMV Customer Assistance at (503) 945-5000. Do **not** call Business Regulation.

## Towers who sell Oregon registered vehicles

Oregon licensed towers are required to remove unexpired year registration stickers from both of the Oregon registration plates on passenger vehicles they sell, unless the buyer is an Oregon licensed dealer or an Oregon licensed dismantler. (Oregon licensed dealers must also remove year registration stickers from the Oregon registration plates on passenger vehicles they sell unless they submit the title documents to DMV on behalf of the customer, or unless the buyer is an Oregon licensed dealer.)

When towers and dealers are required to remove stickers from the registration plates of a vehicle they sell, a Dealer/Tower Trip Permit, Form 735-307 may be sold to the vehicle buyer. Towers must apply to DMV Business Regulations to be able to obtain and sell these permits. See [Chapter R](#) for a description and example of the Dealer/Tower Trip Permit, and how to complete it.