



Auto Repairs

❖ Read this only if you live in the state of Washington.

Should I read this?

Read this to learn about automobile repairs and dealing with mechanics.

Where should I take my car for repairs?

Choose your repair shop with care.

Get advice from friends.

Check out repair shops with the Better Business Bureau or online rating and review sites.

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- ❖ Disputes (disagreements) often arise about what repairs should be made, the cost of repairs, and the repair shop keeping your car until the bill is paid.
 - ❖ Find a shop that does good, reliable work and one you trust because the legal remedies for resolving these disputes are limited.
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What is the Auto Repair Act?

Auto repair facilities in Washington must follow the [Auto Repair Act](#) (ARA), [RCW 46.71](#).

What is an “auto repair facility?”

It is any person, firm, association, or corporation in the business of repairing motor vehicles.

Under state law, the auto repair facility must give you a written estimate for repairs over \$100 if you meet in person. The estimate should include:

- Your odometer reading.
- The specific repair needed.
- The total estimated cost, including parts and labor.
- If they will use Original Manufacturers Equipment (OME).

The repair shop must give you a written invoice after all the work is done. Compare it to the original authorized estimate. The final invoice cannot be more than ten percent of the written estimate without your agreement. **Example:** The repair estimate is \$200. They could charge you up to \$220.

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- ❖ You can authorize repairs over the phone verbally, without a written authorization.
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Does the law cover all repairs?

Yes, including

- **Diagnosis** of repairs needed.
- Repairs needed because of a **collision**.
- **Mechanical** components. These include exhaust, brakes, windshields, and frames.
- **Electrical** components.
- **Engine** repairs. This includes tune-ups.

How do I know my rights?

The repair shop must prominently display a sign called “**Customer Rights**.” This sign says:

YOU ARE ENTITLED TO A WRITTEN PRICE ESTIMATE FOR THE REPAIRS YOU HAVE AUTHORIZED. YOU ARE ALSO ENTITLED TO REQUIRE THE REPAIR FACILITY TO OBTAIN YOUR ORAL OR WRITTEN AUTHORIZATION TO EXCEED THE WRITTEN PRICE ESTIMATE. YOUR SIGNATURE OR INITIALS WILL INDICATE YOUR SELECTION.

You also have the right to ask for the damaged parts to be shown or returned to you, if you want them, before the work is done.

Should I get an estimate?

Before you take your vehicle to a repair shop, find out if an existing warranty covers the parts or service you need. If so, ask if the repair facility will honor the parts warranty and if it provides a written warranty for its own work. Then go to the shop to get an estimate, including the condition to be repaired, the cost of needed parts, and the expected labor charge. Find out in advance if there is a diagnostic charge. If the estimate seems too high, ask for an explanation and get a second opinion before you authorize any work.

Ask for everything to be in writing. Keep a copy of all the written records.

What is a Possessory Lien?

A repair shop generally can keep your vehicle until you have paid all repair costs. It loses this right **if one of these is true:**

- You asked them to return all repaired parts to you. They did not.
- They charged you over 110% of the written repair estimate.
- You did not authorize (tell them to do) the repair.
- They did not post the Customers Rights sign.

What if they will not give my car back?

If they wrongfully refuse to give back your car, you can do the following:

- Pay to get your car back. Then sue in Small Claims Court for up to \$10,000 to get your money back or
- Get help from a lawyer.

❖ Read [How do I Sue in Small Claims Court](#) to learn more.

Does the law guarantee repair work?

No. Discuss any warranty with the repair shop before you authorize any work. Demand a written copy of their warranty.

What if I'm not happy with the repairs?

Try to work with the shop to fix the problems. If that doesn't work, you can do the following:

- Sue in Small Claims Court for up to \$10,000 in damages or
- Get help from a lawyer.

Get Legal Help

Outside King County, call the CLEAR Hotline at 1-888-201-1014 weekdays between 9:15 am - 12:15 pm.

In King County, call 2-1-1 weekdays between 8:00 am - 6:00 pm. They will refer you to a legal aid provider.

Seniors (age 60 and over) can also call CLEAR*Sr at 1-888-387-7111 (statewide).

You can also apply online with CLEAR*Online: nwjustice.org/get-legal-help

This publication provides general information concerning your rights and responsibilities. It is not intended as a substitute for specific legal advice.

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