

CONSUMER PROTECTION SECTION

OHIO AUTO REPAIRS AND SERVICES LAWS



MARC DANN
ATTORNEY GENERAL

STATE OF OHIO

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT AUTO REPAIRS AND SERVICES

The Attorney General's Office receives more automobile complaints from Ohio consumers than any other consumer product or service. Consumers have described situations in which they've spent hundreds of dollars on a job that should have cost much less. They report that they have paid for repairs that were not properly made the first time, that repairs were made without their permission, and that they have paid for unnecessary repairs.

While most auto dealers and mechanics do not want to cheat you, you should protect yourself by knowing the **Motor Vehicle Repairs or Services Law**.

DO I HAVE THE RIGHT TO INSIST ON AN ESTIMATE?

When you bring your car to a shop during its working hours, the mechanic must follow certain specific procedures:

- A conspicuous sign must be posted, or you must be provided with a written form before repairs or services begin, which informs

you of your right to a written, oral, or no estimate, if the anticipated cost of the work exceeds \$25.

- When the anticipated cost exceeds \$25, the mechanic must, before any work begins, provide you with a form on which you initial your choice of a written estimate, an oral estimate, or no estimate at all.
- Work may not be started on repairs or services until you have been given the written, oral, or no estimate (if that is what you selected) and have authorized the work to be done. Faxes are considered an acceptable and convenient way to obtain an estimate and authorize work.
- The estimate choice form must include the estimate amount and the reasonably anticipated completion date.
- The mechanic must contact you and get your permission to continue the repair work if the cost of the work will exceed the estimate by more than 10 percent.
- If the anticipated cost was below \$25 and you did not receive an estimate, but the cost of unforeseen, needed work will make the total bill higher than \$25, the facility must get your written or oral permission for the repairs.



- **NOTE:** Mechanics can avoid these estimate requirements only by giving an exact price quote, in writing, which is binding for five days.

When the shop advertises a night drop, early bird service, or other such program that allows you to leave your car for work during hours when the shop is closed, the shop must:

- Make available a form that informs you of your right to an estimate. The form must include instructions for you to choose a written estimate, oral estimate, or no estimate at all. If you select a written estimate and would like a copy of it before the work begins, expect to go back to pick it up, or make arrangements to receive a faxed estimate and return your authorization.

If you have car trouble and are stranded, and must make arrangements for the pickup and repair of the car over the phone, the facility must do the following:

- Tell you that you have the right to a written or oral estimate during the phone conversation. If you want an estimate, it must be given to you before the work begins.
- If your car needs to be towed, the facility must inform you in advance about how towing charges are determined, such as cost per mile.

WHAT OTHER RIGHTS DO I HAVE?

You have several other rights regarding the repair of your automobile. The law requires the repair shop to:

- Immediately provide you with a copy of any written document signed or initialed by you.
- Return replaced parts unless they are to be rebuilt or sold by the shop. This reuse must be made known to you in advance.
- Inform you in advance of any surcharge, such as a flat percentage charge, for miscellaneous materials and supplies.
- Tell you in advance if there will be charges for disassembly, reassembly, or partially completed work.
- Tell you before your service or repair is started whether any work will be done by another shop, unless the repair shop you are dealing with will provide a warranty for the outside work. If you ask, the facility must tell you the name of the other shop.
- Give you, upon request, an itemized receipt for a motor vehicle or any parts you turn over to a facility.
- Provide you with an itemized list of repairs and services that have been done, including the cost for labor, and the name of the mechanic who did the work.

THE REPAIR SHOP CANNOT:

- Charge you for repairs or services you did not authorize.
- Tell you repairs are necessary when they are not.
- Tell you that repairs were performed when they were not.
- Tell you that your auto is in dangerous condition when it is not.
- Substantially underestimate the repair or service costs.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I HAVE A COMPLAINT?

First, give the repair shop a chance to fix the trouble. Take the car back and talk to the repair or service department manager, the owner of the business, or the dealer.

If you fail to get satisfactory results, believe the facility has cheated you, or if you just have questions, call:

Consumer Protection Section
30 E. Broad St., 14th Fl.
Columbus, Ohio 43215-3400

The Toll-Free
Consumer Protection Line:
(800) 282-0515

For TTY users, please call
995-7147 (Columbus) or
(888) 567-6881

www.ag.state.oh.us



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