Test Vehicles

Test vehicles can be:

- Current and/or past model year vehicles being operated and tested for parts durability.
- Experimental or preproduction (prototype) vehicles being operated and tested to determine the vehicles’ marketability.
- A pilot vehicle being operated and tested for equipment or design problems.

To conduct temporary vehicle testing under the California Health and Safety Code §§43101–43104:

- The manufacturer must provide a Statement of Facts (REG 256) form which states:
  - The beginning and ending dates of the testing period.
  - That the vehicle will not be sold in California.
- Imported vehicles must have approval from all the following agencies, which must be carried in the vehicle at all times:
  - U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT).
  - U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).
  - California Air Resources Board (CARB).
  - U.S. Customs. A U.S. Customs, Declaration (HS-7) form is required.

Prototype Vehicles

Prototype vehicles are produced without documentation (manufacturer’s statement of origin) because they are not intended to be registered or sold in California.

Prototype vehicles are released for evaluation purposes prior to actual production.
Prototype Vehicles, continued

To conduct prototype vehicle evaluations:

- The manufacturer or distributor must provide written certification, which must be carried in the vehicle at all times, that:
  - The vehicle meets U.S. FMVSS and EPA standards and has CARB approval.
  - Designates the individual or firm authorized to operate the vehicle.
  - Indicates the beginning and ending dates of the evaluation period.
- The vehicle:
  - May only be operated for evaluation or promotional use, not for personal use.
  - May only be operated on California manufacturer or distributor license plates for up to 90 days. Nonresident manufacturer or distributor license plates cannot be used in California.
  - Must have CARB approval to operate in California, which must be carried in the vehicle at all times.
  - Must be registered for street use if operated by a contracted commercial or noncommercial entity other than the manufacturer.
  - Must be registered in the manufacturer’s name, if operated under a blanket authority.

Media Evaluation Vehicles

Media evaluation vehicles are used for evaluation or promotional purposes by national media entities, such as Road and Track, Car & Driver Magazine, or the Los Angeles Times.

To conduct media evaluations or use a vehicle for promotional purposes:

- The manufacturer or distributor must provide written certification, which must be carried in the vehicle at all times, that:
  - The vehicle meets U.S. FMVSS and EPA standards and has CARB approval.
  - Designates the individual or firm authorized to operate the vehicle.
  - Indicates the beginning and ending dates of the evaluation period.
- The vehicle:
  - May only be operated for evaluation or promotional use, not for personal use.
  - Must be equipped with a California emission system, as evidenced by a label under the hood.
  - May be operated on California manufacturer or distributor license plates for a period not to exceed 30 days. Manufacturer or distributor license plates may only be used on a vehicle equipped with a California emission system and registered for street use in California.
  - Must have CARB approval to operate in California, which must be carried in the vehicle at all times.
  - May be operated on California registration for up to 12 months and removed from the state no later than the ending date of the CARB authorization. If license plates and a registration card are issued, they must be surrendered to the department when the authorization ends.
  - Cannot be sold in California.
Procedures

To register test, prototype, and media evaluation vehicles, the manufacturer or distributor must submit the following to the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) headquarters (applications cannot be processed in field offices):

- A completed Application for Title or Registration (REG 343) form showing the manufacturer or distributor as the registered owner and the cost information.
- A Verification of Vehicle (REG 31) form.
- An invoice in the name of the manufacturer or distributor designating the manufacturer or distributor as the owner.

**NOTE:** The invoice is used in lieu of a registration or ownership document. A California Certificate of Title will not be issued.

- A REG 256 certifying that the vehicle will:
  — Be used for evaluation, promotional, or testing purposes only.
  — Not be operated for personal use.
  — Not be sold in California.
- A copy of the CARB authorization to operate in California (in lieu of a smog certification).
- Fees due by check or money order (cash will not be accepted). Manufacturers or distributors may calculate the fees due or use the DMV registration fee calculator at www.dmv.ca.gov/FeeCalculatorWeb/index.jsp.

All of the above documents and fees due must be mailed to:

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<th>Regular Mail</th>
<th>Overnight Mail</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Special Processing Unit MS D238</td>
<td>Department of Motor Vehicles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Motor Vehicles</td>
<td>2415 First Ave MS D238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PO Box 932345</td>
<td>Sacramento, CA 95818</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sacramento, CA 94232-3450</td>
<td>Attn: Special Processing Unit</td>
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</tbody>
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Background

Previously, test, prototype, and media evaluation vehicle information was not included in the Vehicle Industry Registrations Procedures Manual. This information will be included in a future revision.

References

*California Health and Safety Code §§43101-43104*