START A BUSINESS - NEW YORK

How to start a roadside assistance company in New York

Form the business, get a Certificate of Authority, check the locksmith license before offering lockouts in New York City, and follow the towing rules if you tow.

Sources verified 2026-11-21 - Updated 2026-11-21

1 Is roadside assistance right for you?

Roadside companies help stranded drivers with jump starts, tire changes, fuel delivery, lockouts and winch-outs, often for motor clubs and insurers. It suits people who like driving, can work nights and weekends, and stay calm next to traffic.

2 Form the business and get a Certificate of Authority

1. Choose a structure. An LLC files Articles of Organization with the Department of State ($200), then within 120 days publishes notice of its formation in two newspapers and files a Certificate of Publication ($50); if it does not, its authority to do business is suspended. A sole proprietor or partnership using an assumed name files a business certificate with the county clerk.
2. Register for sales tax through New York Business Express at least 20 days before you start, and wait for your Certificate of Authority. Display it where you do business. Operating without one can cost up to $500 for the first day and $200 for each day after, up to $10,000.

3 Lockouts and locksmith licenses

We found no New York State locksmith license. In New York City, DCWP states that a Locksmith license is required to open and close locks by mechanical means. Ask DCWP whether your vehicle lockout service needs it, and ask the county where you work about local licenses.

4 If you also tow

Towing adds DMV tow truck registration, the W endorsement for every driver, and in New York City a DCWP Tow Truck Company license with insurance minimums. See our New York towing guide.

5 Sales tax

Most charges for servicing or repairing a vehicle are taxable in New York, and towing a disabled vehicle is taxable. Ask the Tax Department how each service you offer is taxed and keep clear invoices.

6 Equipment and safety

Plan for a service vehicle with warning lights, cones or flares, a jump pack, tire tools and a floor jack, a fuel can approved for transport, and lockout tools if you are licensed for them. Protect every scene before you start work.

7 Your first steps

1. Form the business and get your Certificate of Authority.
2. Buy commercial auto and general liability insurance.
3. Check locksmith licensing before offering lockouts.
4. Follow the towing rules if you add towing.
5. Sign up with motor clubs or insurers.
6. List your business on Nearby Car Care

Requirements at a glance

Form the business (Department of State or county clerk)

Required - State - New York Department of State; your county clerk

Corporations and LLCs file with the New York Department of State; an LLC files Articles of Organization and then, within 120 days, publishes notice of its formation in two newspapers and files a Certificate of Publication, or its authority to do business is suspended. Individuals or partnerships using an assumed name file a business certificate with the county clerk. The DMV asks facility applicants for the DOS filing receipt or the county business certificate.

Fees: LLC Articles of Organization: $200. Certificate of Publication: $50 (newspaper costs are extra).

Official application: https://dos.ny.gov/articles-organization-domestic-limited-liability-company-0

Sales Tax Certificate of Authority

Required - State - New York State Department of Taxation and Finance

If you will make sales subject to sales tax, register with the Tax Department through New York Business Express at least 20 days before you begin business and wait for your Certificate of Authority. Display it at your place of business (or in your vehicle if you have no fixed location). The rate depends on the location; use the Department's rate lookup by address.

Fees: Operating without a Certificate of Authority: penalty up to $500 for the first day and up to $200 for each later day, up to $10,000; $50 penalty for not displaying it.

Sales tax on roadside services

Required - State - New York State Department of Taxation and Finance

Most charges for maintaining, servicing or repairing a vehicle are taxable in New York, and towing or transporting a disabled vehicle is taxable. Ask the Tax Department how each service you offer is taxed.

New York City locksmith license for lockouts

Required in some cases - Municipal - New York City Department of Consumer and Worker Protection

In New York City, DCWP states that you must have a Locksmith license to repair, service, install, inspect, and open and close locks by mechanical means. Ask DCWP whether vehicle lockout service in the city needs this license.

We found no New York State locksmith license. Some counties license locksmiths; ask the county where you work.

If you also tow: tow truck registration, W endorsement and local towing licens

Required in some cases - State - New York State Department of Motor Vehicles; New York City Department

Towing adds its own rules: register tow trucks with the DMV, every driver needs the W (Tow Truck) endorsement, and towing in New York City needs a DCWP Tow Truck Company license with insurance minimums. See our New York towing guides.

Official agencies and links

Articles of Organization for Domestic Limited Liability Company

New York Department of State, Division of Corporations

https://dos.ny.gov/articles-organization-domestic-limited-liability-company-0

CDL Endorsements (license endorsement codes)

New York State Department of Motor Vehicles

https://dmv.ny.gov/driver-license/commercial-drivers/cdl-endorsements

Auto Repair and Body Shops (TB-ST-40)

New York State Department of Taxation and Finance

https://www.tax.ny.gov/pubs_and_bulls/tg_bulletins/st/auto_repair.htm

How to Register for New York State Sales Tax (TB-ST-360)
New York State Department of Taxation and Finance
https://www.tax.ny.gov/pubs_and_bulls/tg_bulletins/st/how_to_register_for_nys_sales_tax.htm

Locksmith License Application Checklist
New York City Department of Consumer and Worker Protection
https://www.nyc.gov/site/dca/businesses/license-checklist-locksmith.page

Frequently asked questions

Do I need a license for roadside assistance in New York?
We found no state license for roadside assistance. Lockouts in New York City may need a DCWP Locksmith license, and towing has its own rules.

Are roadside services taxable in New York?
Most vehicle services are taxable, and towing a disabled vehicle is taxable. Ask the Tax Department about your specific services.

This guide is general information, not legal advice. Rules change and can depend on your city or county, so confirm with the official agencies linked below before you apply.

https://nearbycarcare.com/resources/business/start-roadside-assistance-company/new-york/