START A BUSINESS - DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

# How to start a vehicle wrap and graphics business in DC

Wraps you sell are taxable in DC; ask how installation is taxed and whether DLCP's auto repair license (which covers painting and finishing) applies, and know the USDOT marking rules.

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## 1 Is a wrap business right for you?

Wrap shops design, print and install vinyl wraps, fleet graphics, lettering and USDOT numbers. It suits detail-oriented people with design or installation skills.

## 2 Form the business and register for sales tax

1. Choose a structure. LLCs and corporations register with DLCP's Corporations Division.
2. Register with the Office of Tax and Revenue to collect DC sales tax and get a Clean Hands certification. Repair services are taxable, labor included.
3. Check your city or county for local licenses and zoning.

## 3 Licenses

We found no DC license for wrap installation. Check your city or county for licenses and zoning.

## 4 Sales tax

Wraps you sell are taxable, and DC taxes installing property as part of a repair or alteration; ask the Office of Tax and Revenue about your installation charges.

## 5 Marking rules your customers rely on

Vehicles that need a USDOT number show the carrier name and USDOT number on both sides, readable from 50 feet.

## 6 Your first steps

1. Form the business and register with the Office of Tax and Revenue.
2. Check local licenses and zoning.
3. Buy insurance and equipment.
4. List your business on Nearby Car Care

## Requirements at a glance

### DC sales tax registration

Required - State - DC Office of Tax and Revenue

Register with the Office of Tax and Revenue and collect DC sales tax on taxable sales and services. A Clean Hands certification is part of DC business licensing.

Register your business entity with DLCP's Corporations Division first. Fees not verified here.

Official application: https://code.dccouncil.gov/us/dc/council/code/sections/47-2001

### Sales tax on wraps and installation

Required - State - DC Office of Tax and Revenue

Wraps you sell are taxable, and DC taxes charges for installing property as part of a repair or alteration; ask the Office of Tax and Revenue how your installation charges are treated.

### Ask DLCP which license covers vehicle finishing

Required in some cases - State - DC Department of Licensing and Consumer Protection

DLCP's Consumer Goods (Auto Repair) category includes alteration, painting and finishing of vehicles; ask DLCP whether wrap installation falls under it.

### USDOT number marking on commercial motor vehicles

Required in some cases - Federal - Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration

Vehicles that need a USDOT number show the carrier's name and USDOT number on both sides, readable from 50 feet in daylight (49 CFR 390.21).

## Official agencies and links

**49 CFR 390.21, Marking of self-propelled CMVs and intermodal equipment**
Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (eCFR)
https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-49/subtitle-B/chapter-III/subchapter-B/part-390/subpart-B/section-390.21

**D.C. Code 47-2001, Sales tax definitions (retail sales of services)**
Council of the District of Columbia
https://code.dccouncil.gov/us/dc/council/code/sections/47-2001

**Consumer Goods (Auto Repair) business license**
DC Department of Licensing and Consumer Protection
https://dlcp.dc.gov/node/1618741

## Frequently asked questions

Do wrap installers need a license in DC?
Ask DLCP; its auto repair category covers painting and finishing of vehicles.

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-vehicle-wrap-business/district-of-columbia/