LICENSES, PERMITS & CERTIFICATIONS - RHODE ISLAND

Rhode Island auto repair shop licenses and permits

Sales tax on parts, the DBR auto body license, insurance and records for Rhode Island repair and body shops.

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

1 The rules at a glance

- Form the business and get a sales permit
- Parts taxed at 7%; separately stated labor is not
- Body work: DBR license ($300 per year), 4,000 square feet (waivable), zoning, fire letter, EPA number
- Body shop insurance: $500,000 liability, $100,000 garage keepers
- EPA 609 for A/C work

We found no state license for general mechanical repair.

Requirements at a glance

Form the business with the Department of State

Required - State - Rhode Island Department of State

LLCs file Articles of Organization and corporations file Articles of Incorporation with the Department of State, then file an annual report every year after the first.
Fees: LLC Articles of Organization $150; corporation $230; annual report $50 per year.

Permit to make sales at retail

Required - State - Rhode Island Division of Taxation

Every person engaged in making retail sales in Rhode Island must obtain a permit from the Division of Taxation. The sales tax rate is 7%. Permits are renewed every year by February 1, with no fee.
Fees: No fee for the annual renewal.
Official application: https://tax.ri.gov/tax-sections/sales-excise-taxes

Collect sales tax on parts; state labor separately

Required - State - Rhode Island Division of Taxation

Repair shops and body shops are retailers of parts. List the parts price separately from repair and installation labor: separately stated labor is not taxed, but if it is not separated the whole charge is treated as parts. You must separate the charges when the customer asks. Sandpaper, tape, filler, paint and tools you use are taxable to you.

Department of Business Regulation auto body license (body work)

Required in some cases - State - Rhode Island Department of Business Regulation

No person may do motor vehicle body work (preparing, fixing, restoring, painting or putting together a vehicle body, including glass) for business without a Department of Business Regulation license (R.I. Gen. Laws 5-38-4). Class A (full collision) and Class B licenses and Special Use licenses are available. Work is done at a fixed location with at least 4,000 square feet of heated ground level floor space (the Department may waive this), and you need zoning approval, a letter from the fire department or State Fire Marshal and an EPA number.
Fees: $300 per year; the standard three-year license is $900.
Keep repair records for two years (Class A shops keep certain records for five years). We found no Rhode Island state license for general mechanical repair.
Official application: https://dbr.ri.gov/sites/g/files/xkgbur696/files/2026-06/ABClassA_Application_V1.pdf

Auto body shop insurance

Required in some cases - State - Rhode Island Department of Business Regulation

Licensed body shops keep bodily injury and property damage liability of at least $500,000 per occurrence and garage keepers' legal liability (comprehensive and collision for customers' vehicles) of at least $100,000 per occurrence.

Amount: $500,000 liability; $100,000 garage keepers

EPA Section 609 certification for air conditioning work

Required in some cases - Federal - U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Anyone who repairs or services a motor vehicle air conditioning system for payment or bartering must be certified by an EPA-approved Section 609 program.

Official agencies and links

Section 609 Technician Training and Certification Programs
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
https://www.epa.gov/mvac/section-609-technician-training-and-certification-programs

Full Collision Repair Class A license application
Rhode Island Department of Business Regulation
https://dbr.ri.gov/sites/g/files/xkgbur696/files/2026-06/ABClassA_Application_V1.pdf

Motor Vehicle Body and Salvage Vehicle Repair (230-RICR-30-05-2)
Rhode Island Department of Business Regulation (Rhode Island Code of Regulations)
https://rules.sos.ri.gov/regulations/part/230-30-05-2

Business Basics: Types of Structures
Rhode Island Department of State, Business Services
https://www.sos.ri.gov/divisions/business-services/business-basics/types-of-structures

Sales and Excise Taxes
Rhode Island Division of Taxation
https://tax.ri.gov/tax-sections/sales-excise-taxes

Repairers, Reconditioners, and Recappers (280-RICR-20-70-24)
Rhode Island Division of Taxation (Rhode Island Code of Regulations)
https://rules.sos.ri.gov/Regulations/part/280-20-70-24

Frequently asked questions

How long is a Rhode Island auto body license valid?
Up to three years; the standard three-year license costs $900.

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.