

IMPORTING VEHICLES FROM THE USA TO CANADA

The Registrar of Imported Vehicles (RIV) was created by Transport Canada and is administered by Livingston International Inc.

Three main steps of importing a U.S. vehicle:

- Before you Import:
 - Vehicle admissibility
 - RIV exemptions
 - Recall clearance
 - Modification & inspection requirements
 - Vehicle branding history
- At the Border:
 - U.S. customs entry
 - Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA)
- After Vehicle Entry:
 - Vehicle modifications
 - RIV inspection process
 - Vehicle licensing
- Importer Checklist: <http://www.riv.ca/ImporterChecklist.aspx>

6.1 BEFORE YOU IMPORT

6.1.1 VEHICLE ADMISSIBILITY

- Check the vehicle against Transport Canada's List of Vehicles Admissible from the U.S. – if there is no information you must contact the manufacturer.
- Vehicles originally manufactured to standards other than U.S. or Canadian are not admissible into the RIV program
- Transport Canada has a Pre-Clearance program which helps facilitate shipments through customs with minimal inspection and security. Retailers must apply here.
- A vehicle is inadmissible when the manufacturer advises Transport Canada that it does not meet Canadian Motor Vehicle Safety Standards nor can it be modified to do so.

6.1.2 RIV EXEMPTIONS

Vehicles are exempt from RIV registration if they meet one of the following conditions:

- Vehicles older than 15 years
- Vehicles entering temporarily with visitors, diplomats, visiting forces personnel, or U.S. pre-clearance personnel
- Vehicles entering temporarily for exhibition, demonstration, evaluation, testing, or other special purposes

6.1.3 RECALL CLEARANCE

- Recall clearance documents verify that any defects identified by the manufacturer as a potential safety risk to the vehicle's operator, occupants, and public at large, have been corrected.

- The responsibility is on the importer, and the vehicle will not be released without recall clearance
- To obtain recall clearance documentation go here.
- Acceptable forms of recall clearance documentation include:
 - A letter from the vehicle manufacturer's U.S. or Canadian head office.
 - A printout from an American or Canadian dealership's vehicle service database
 - Original Equipment Manufacturer's (OEM) website

6.1.4 MODIFICATION AND INSPECTION REQUIREMENTS

- Vehicles may require modifications to comply with Canada Motor Vehicle Safety Standards
- Modifications and associated costs are the responsibility of the importer
- Modifications must be completed before the RIV inspection
- The RIV inspection must be completed within 45 days from the date of import
- Canadian Tire and a number of independent centers across Canada are authorized to perform RIV inspections

6.1.5 VEHICLE BRANDING HISTORY

- A brand is a permanent designation on a vehicle's title indicating that the vehicle has previously sustained substantial damage through collision, natural disaster, or another occurrence requiring repair.
- Depending on the type of U.S. brand a vehicle may require a second structural integrity inspection. Vehicles with a brand equivalent to Canadian "non-repairable" status cannot be licensed in Canada.
- RIV recommends that you obtain a complete title history for any vehicle you may consider importing (e.g. CARFAX, AutoCheck, CarProof).

6.2 AT THE BORDER

6.2.1 U.S. CUSTOMS ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

U.S. customs and Border Protection recommends that you contact the customs office where you plan to cross the border to verify the required documentation.

- Required documentation must be submitted at least 72 hours prior to export and
- The vehicle must be presented to U.S. customs at the time of export

6.2.2 CANADA BORDER SERVICES AGENCY ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

CBSA officers will:

- Check documentation – including title, registration, and proof of ownership (NOTE: if the importer of a leased/financed vehicle cannot obtain the original Certificate of Title or a certified copy of the Certificate of Title, an original statement/letter from the financing/leasing company including the VIN and authorizing that the vehicle be exported from the U.S. must be presented along with a copy of the Certificate of Title).
- Provide vehicle import form – Form 1
- Verify admissibility
- Facilitate payment of the RIV fee

6.3 AFTER VEHICLE ENTRY

Once the vehicle has entered Canada required modifications must be completed, and the vehicle must be inspected at an authorized Registrar of Imported Vehicles (RIV) inspection center. The following conditions must be met:

- Vehicle has crossed the border and Vehicle Import Form – Form 1 has been completed and submitted to RIV through CBSA
- The RIV registration fee has been paid
- RIV has received confirmation that there are no outstanding recalls on the vehicle

RIV will then issue an inspection form identifying modification and inspection requirements specific to the vehicle. The vehicle must pass the RIV inspection process before being licensed in Canada.

6.3.1 VEHICLE MODIFICATIONS

All necessary modifications and inspection requirements as stipulated by the RIV inspection form must be completed within 45 days from the date of import. In some cases modifications must be performed by a service center authorized by the manufacturer. Requirements are published in Transport Canada's List of Vehicles Admissible from the United States.

Typical vehicle modifications can be found [here](#).

6.3.2 RIV INSPECTION

- Modifications must be completed before the RIV inspection
- The RIV inspection must be completed within 45 days from the date of import
- Failure to pass the RIV inspection process within the specified time will make the vehicle non-compliant, leading to fines, penalties, and the ultimate removal of the vehicle from Canada
- Once the vehicle has passed the RIV inspection, the inspection center will stamp the Vehicle Import Form – Form 1 which will be required for registration and licensing of the vehicle.

6.3.3 PROVINCIAL LICENSING

In order to register and license an imported vehicle the stamped Vehicle Import Form – Form 1 must be presented along with the bills of sale, title, and proof of insurance as well as any other provincially required documents. Contact the appropriate jurisdiction for detailed information on how to obtain licensing.

6.4 COST CONSIDERATIONS

Importers should be aware of the cost of importing a vehicle from the United States. The most common costs include:

- RIV registration fees (excluding parts-only vehicles):
 - \$195 + GST and QST for vehicles entering through Quebec
 - \$195 + GST/HST for vehicles entering through any other province
- If the vehicle has air conditioning excise tax of \$100 applies.
- Additional excise taxes (Green Levy) apply if the vehicle has a weighted average fuel consumption rating of 13 or more litres per 100k and is put into service after March 19, 2007
- GST is collected on all imported vehicles and is based on:
 - The current GST rate and
 - The U.S. sale price of the vehicle before any trade-ins plus
 - Any state or local taxes paid plus
 - Any excise taxes or duties assessed at the border
- There may be additional provincial requirements to be met with respect to automobile insurance, provincial sales tax, licensing fees, and environmental standards in order to get the vehicle licensed and registered.
- Auto insurance is a pre-condition for vehicle registration and licensing in Canada
- A temporary permit or plate allows a vehicle to be driven into Canada for import, before it has been licensed permanently. The provincial requirements vary across Canada.