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Dealer advertising best practices



Earlier this year, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) sent letters to numerous motor vehicle dealer groups across the country, [warning them against deceptive pricing practices](#). Considering the FTC’s actions, the Department encourages Wisconsin dealers to take this as an opportunity to review advertising and pricing procedures and ensure they comply with state and federal law.

The advertised price is the selling price

Wisconsin Administrative Code Trans 139.03(3)(a) requires that the advertised price of a vehicle include all charges a consumer will pay to acquire ownership of the vehicle. However, tax, title, and registration fees do not need to be included in the advertised price.

Include service fees

The FTC has taken the position that service fees must be included in the total selling price of the vehicle. While Wis. Admin. Code Trans 139.03(3)(a) does not require service fees to be included in the price, it does not mandate their

exclusion from the price, either. To comply with FTC guidance, the Department advises dealers charging service fees to include the service fee in the total selling price of the vehicle.

Include required add-on products or services

If a dealer requires the purchase of an add-on product or service as part of the vehicle sale, that product or service must be included in the total selling price.

Obtain customer approval for optional add-on products or services

Dealers can offer optional add-on products or services with the purchase of a vehicle. Dealers should ensure the optional nature of these products is clearly communicated to the customer, and dealers must obtain the customer’s express informed consent for purchase of optional products.

State vehicle availability

Per Wis. Admin. Code Trans 139.03(10), vehicles advertised must be available for delivery within a reasonable time. The department considers seven business days as a “reasonable” time for delivery.

Regarding new vehicles, if a dealer has possession of the vehicle’s MCO/MSO, but the vehicle will not be available for delivery within seven business days, you may advertise the vehicle by clearly disclosing the earliest date when the vehicle will be available for delivery.

If a dealership has accepted a deposit or down payment on a vehicle and the sale is pending, that vehicle is not available for purchase by anyone else and should not be advertised until the pending sale has been resolved.

Wisconsin Motor Vehicle Business Dealer and Individual credential electronic delivery



The Dealer and Licensing Unit has been successfully delivering electronic Wisconsin Individual credentials – including Buyer’s Licenses Salvage Buyer’s Identification Cards, and Salesperson/Representative Licenses– since July 2025. Beginning Sept. 1, 2026, dealer license certificates will be delivered electronically to the business email address on file with the Dealer and Agent Section. If your dealership does not have a business email address on file with WisDOT, please contact the Dealer and Agent Section at 608-266-1425 or dealerlicensingunit@dot.wi.gov to update your information.

Once you receive your electronic dealer license certificate, you should:

- Print the certificate (color or black ink is acceptable).
- Display the certificate at your business location as required by Wis.Stat.218.0114(17)

Emissions waiver repair cost limit increased to \$1,176

The repair cost limit for all model year vehicles subject to emissions testing increased to \$1,176, effective July 1, 2026. This figure is adjusted annually by the DNR per NR 485.045.

Vehicles subject to emissions testing that continue to fail may be eligible for a cost waiver if actual costs of emissions related repairs exceed the repair cost limit. Only repairs that are related to the vehicle's cause of failure can be used to apply for a cost waiver. Costs covered by any warranty or costs to repair/replace emissions control equipment that has been removed, modified, or disconnected are excluded.



The owner must have emissions related repairs performed on the vehicle at a Recognized Repair Facility to qualify for waiver consideration. A list of Recognized Repair Facilities may be found at the Wisconsin Vehicle Inspection Program website- wisconsinvip.org

Interested in becoming a Recognized Repair Facility?

More information and the application form to apply for Recognized Repair Shop Facility status, free of charge, may be found at wisconsinvip.org/RecognizedRepairFacilityApplication.pdf.

Wis Admin. Code Trans 131.02(39) includes franchised new car dealerships as Recognized Repair Facilities.

If you would like to become recognized, but need to be certified or recertify, you can find information regarding the ASE process at www.ase.com.

Quarterly Report

The following numbers have been generated from the Dealer and Agent Section (DAS) Quarterly Report. This data is from the fourth quarter for the fiscal year beginning July 2025 (April through June 2026).

Field Investigation Unit (FIU)

The following statistics represent the Field Investigation Unit's compliance efforts, community outreach and enforcement actions.

Activity	Third Quarter
Complaints closed	542
Dealer inspections	303
Educational presentations	1

APU/DLU

The Agent Partnership Unit (APU) answers phone calls from dealers, government agencies, financial institutions, gas stations, grocery stores and various other types of agents throughout the state. These agents electronically process either title and registration, or renewal registration applications on behalf of the DMV.

The Dealer Licensing Unit (DLU) issues and renews multiple business license types. Individual licenses are issued to individuals who are selling or purchasing vehicles on behalf of dealerships. DLU answers dealer licensing questions as well as provides information about consumer harm and how to file a dealer complaint to the general public.

Activity	Third Quarter
APU phone calls	10,865
DLU phone calls	8,739
Business licenses issued	667
Individual licenses issued	4,116

Lemon Law

DMV receives telephone and email inquiries from consumers, dealers, lawyers, manufacturers, and law makers. The inquiries range from questions about the specifics of the Lemon Law, to assisting all facets of pursuing a claim.

Activity	Third Quarter
Lemon Law inquiries	68

[FIU Enforcement Actions](#)

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