Correct as at 25th June 2026. It may be superseded at any time.

Extract taken from: Border inspection of imported used vehicles > Reference materials > Guidelines for the detection of reportable damage on imported used vehicles (excl motorcycles)

1 Guidelines for the detection of reportable damage on imported used vehicles (excl motorcycles)

Vehicles imported from Australia

Every vehicle imported from Australia will need to have a Personal Property Securities Register (PPSR) certificate downloaded from https://transact.ppsr.gov.au/ppsr/SearchForMotorVehicle?v=Search

If the certificate identifies the vehicle as 'written off' it must be reported as damaged and a copy of the PPSR certificate uploaded into the Border Inspection system.

1 Introduction

This guide is designed to provide foundation material to assist vehicle inspectors in the requirements for inspecting imported used motor vehicles; and the identification, recording, and flagging of structural damage.

The use of diagrams and photographs is used to support the written standards listed in the guide and illustrates:

- structural areas of unibody and body-over-frame vehicles
- energy management paths
- examples of the types of structural damage that needs to be reported.

> **Note:** refer to Reference material 10 for guidance on the inspection of motorcycles.

Vehicle fitted with ITS Connect

A vehicle must be reported if there is evidence that the ITS Connect system is fitted to the vehicle. The damage flag is to remain on the vehicle even if the ITS Connect system is disabled in Japan.

Note: refer to Technical bulletins 3 Vehicles fitted with ITS Connect

> **Option - (excluding MD1, MD2 minibus)**
>
> **Electronic Stability Control**
>
> - A vehicle must be reported if there is evidence that an electronic stability control (ESC) system is NOT fitted to a used motor vehicle of class MA, MB, MC, or NA.
> - The vehicle must be reported if the ESC warning light stays illuminated when the engine is running.
>
> These provisions will not apply to a vehicle manufactured, or first registered outside of New Zealand, 20 years or more at the time of the border inspection.
>
> **Notes**
>
> - For evidence of acceptable proof that the vehicle is fitted with an ESC system refer to
>
>   Entry certification Technical bulletin 37
> - For identifying the vehicle class refer to
>
>   Entry certification 5-5 Identifying the vehicle class.

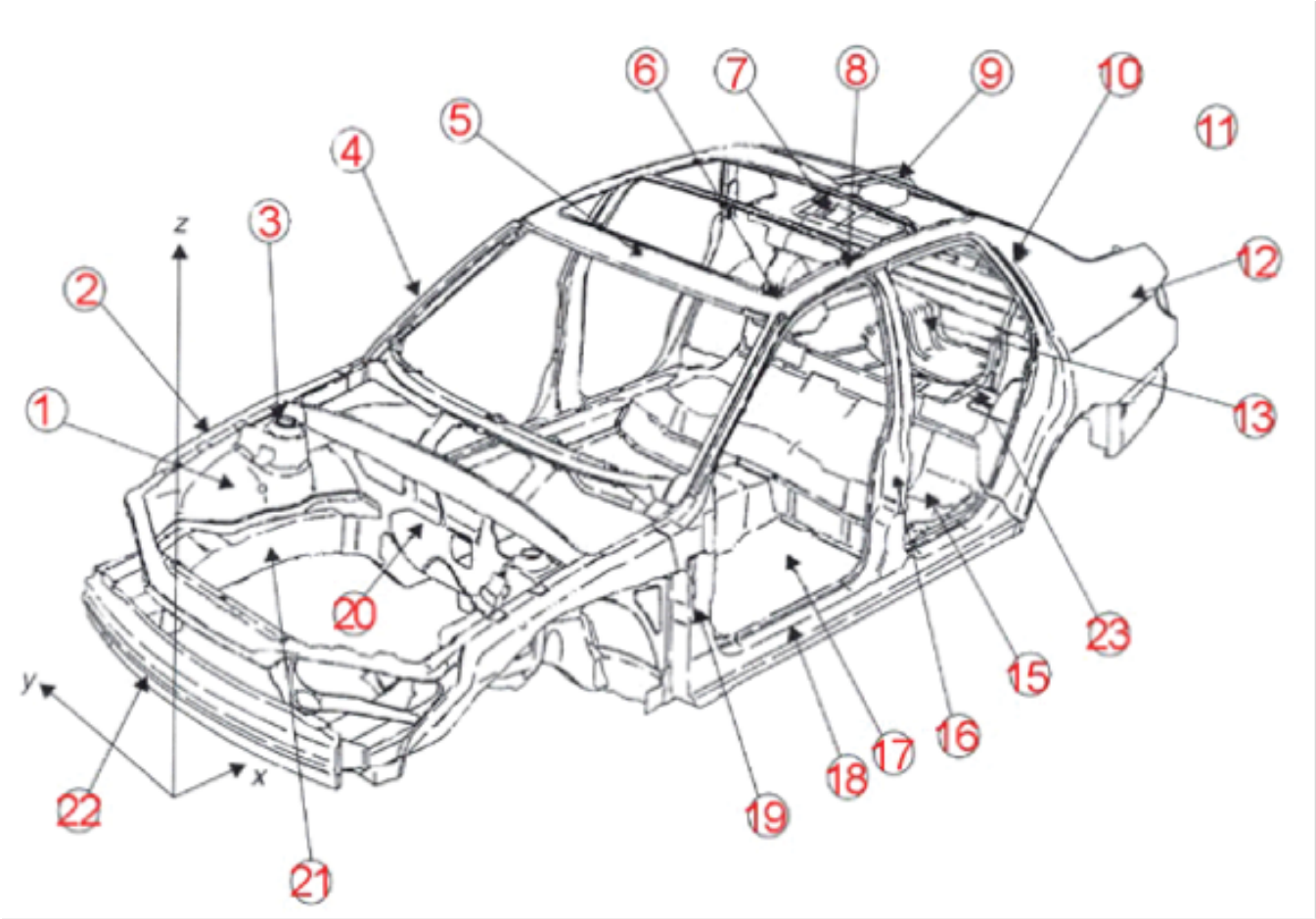
2 Purpose

The purpose of the guide is to provide vehicle inspectors with reference material stipulating the standards for reportable structural damage, supporting information, and to assist in the decision-making process when an imported used vehicle must be reported to NZTA (or ‘flagged’).

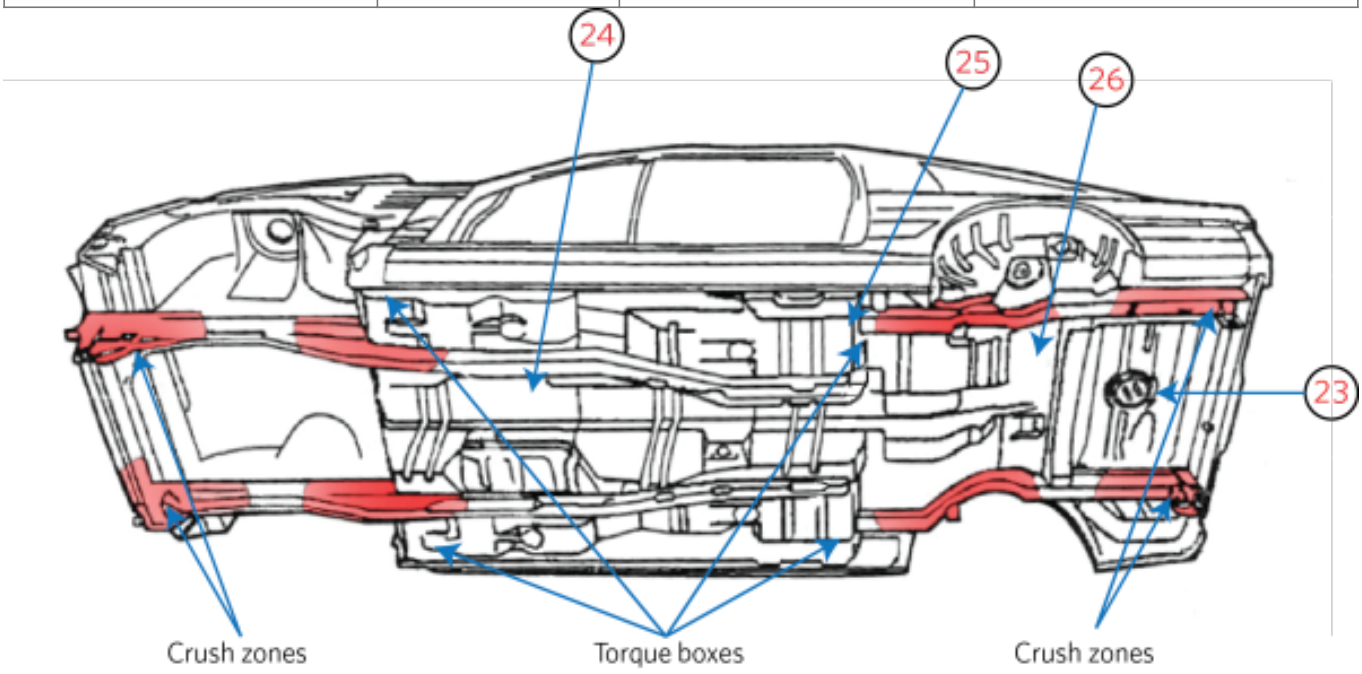
Exclusions to flagging of structural parts, ie those that do not require reporting are described and explained.

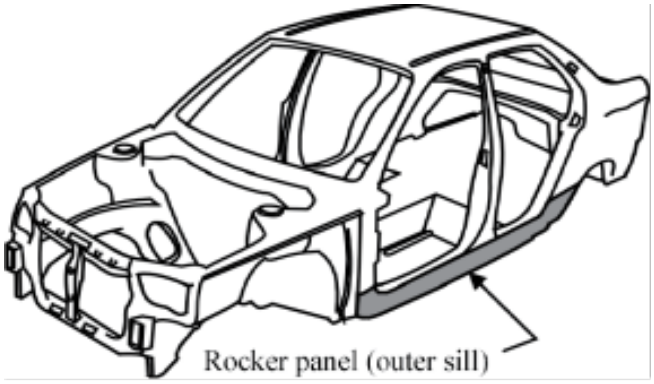
This guide also gives examples of ‘minor’ damage, which would be considered as cosmetic, and do not require reporting to NZTA.

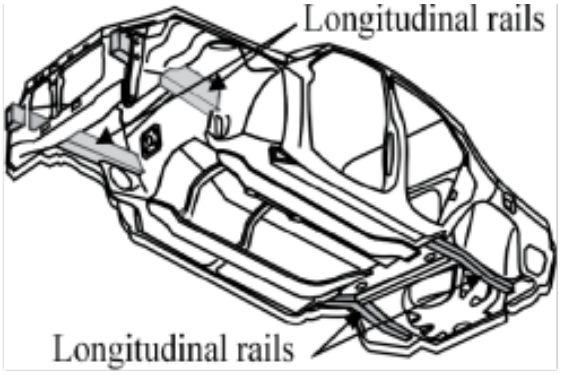
3 Overview – structural parts: unibody chassis

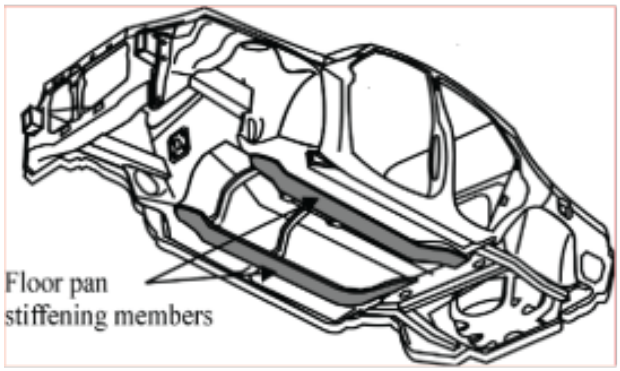


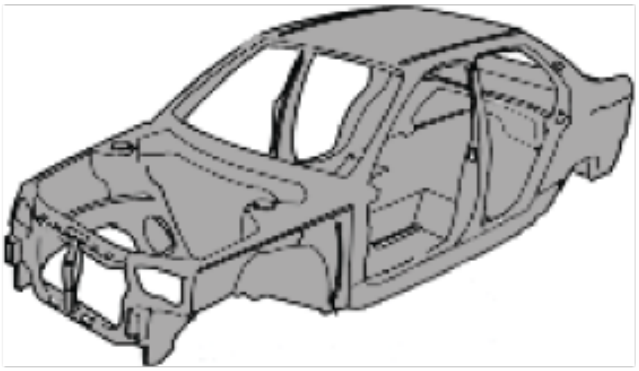
1 Inner guard	**8** Cant rail	**15** Rear seat floor	**22** Front bumper
2 Upper chassis rail (reinforcer)	**9** Roof (not shown)	**16** B pillar	**23** Spare wheel well
3 Strut tower	**10** C pillar (upper)	**17** Floor	**24** Tunnel (longitudinal)
4 A pillar (upper)	**11** Rear panel	**18** Sill (rocker panel)	**25** Rear seat cross beam
5 Windscreen header	**12** Rear ¼ panel	**19** A pillar (lower)	**26** Rear suspension cross beam
6 Roof stiffener	**13** Boot floor	**20** Bulkhead	
7 Parcel tray	**14** Rear seat back	**21** Lower (engine) chassis rail	



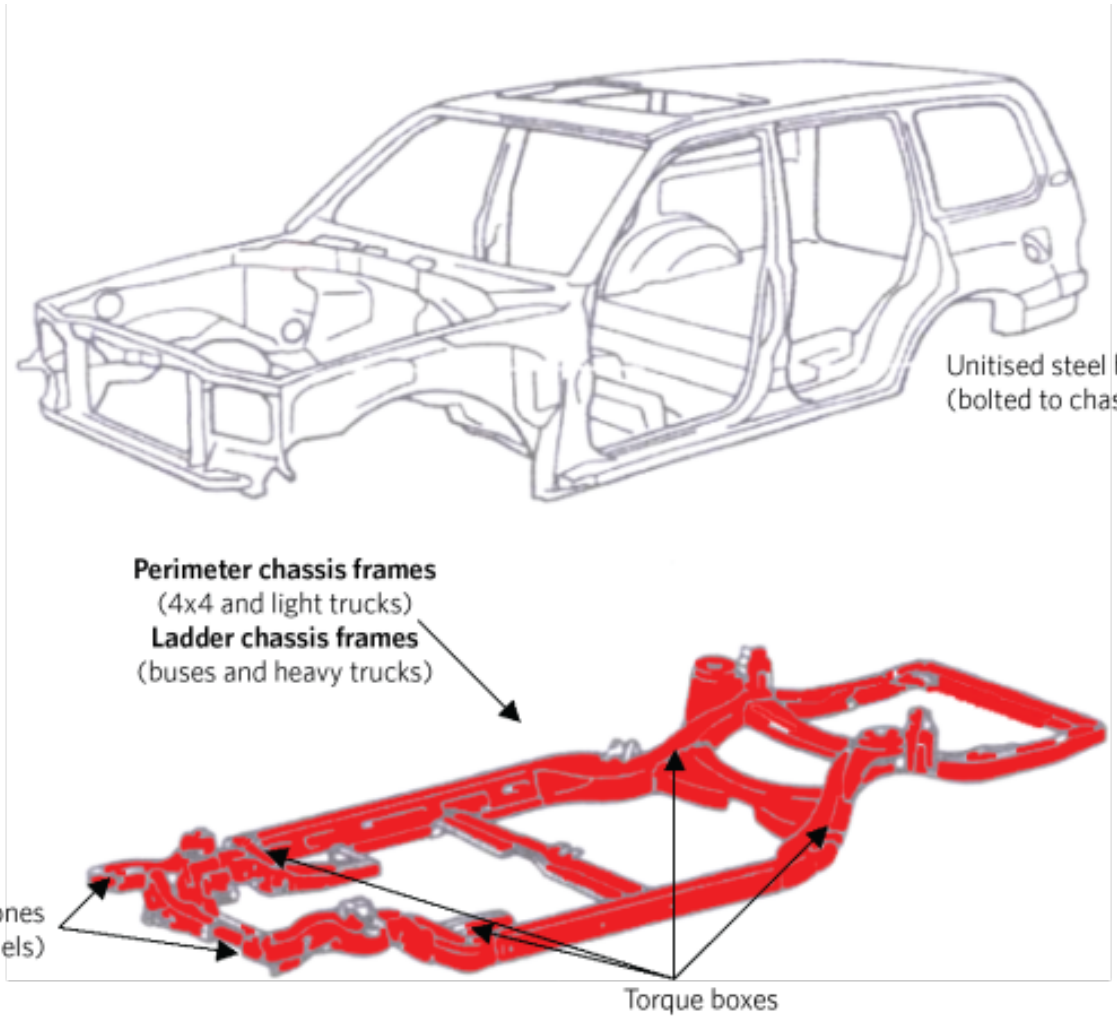




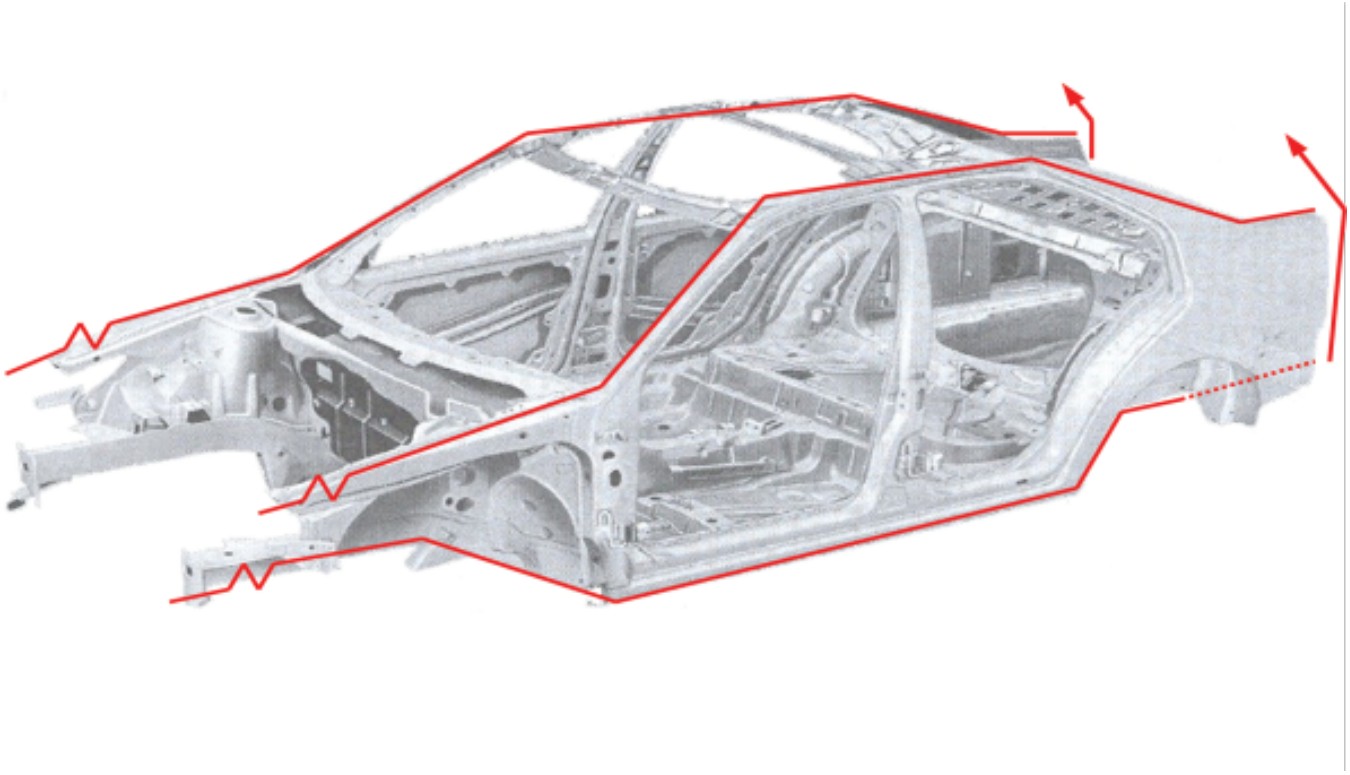




4 Overview – structural parts: body-over-frame chassis



5 Overview – energy management path



The structural integrity of the passenger safety cell is a key feature of motor-vehicle design.

- Front and rear structural parts are designed to absorb or manage collision energy by collapsing in pre-determined areas called crush zones.
- Crush zones are built into the front and rear of the vehicle in the form of holes, slots, dimples, convolutions, or hydro-formed tailored blanks.
- Bonnets are designed to buckle and avoid windscreen penetration, and also minimise pedestrian injury.
- The unibody structure is designed to route collision energy around the passengers; with the passenger safety cell the last area to deform in a crash where collision energy exceeds the design.

6 Criteria for reporting structural damage or corrosion

The following information gives guidance to vehicle inspectors in determining whether or not a light vehicle (including motorcycles where applicable) undergoing border inspection requires reporting.

Applicable legislation

- Land Transport Rule: Vehicle Standards Compliance 2002 (section 4).

Vehicles to which this section applies must be inspected by a vehicle inspector or inspecting organisation appointed under 2.2(1)(k) in accordance with requirements and conditions imposed by NZTA under 2.3.

The criteria detailed below must be used when deciding if any damage or corrosion should be reported. All damage meeting this criteria and found in the energy management path areas must be reported.

The important distinction when applying these criteria is:

- Whether the area identified as damaged by impact, previous repair, or corrosion is structural or cosmetic, and
- Whether the extent of damage is sufficient to compromise the structural integrity of the motor vehicle, or
- Whether evidence of damage, previous damage repair, or heat damage is present in a structural area, or energy management path of the motor vehicle.

Photographs illustrating examples of structural damage and corrosion are shown in **Reference material 5**

Under-body impact damage

A vehicle must be reported if it has underbody damage as a result of a collision with a substantial object, sufficient to cause the splitting of seam welds, distortion of suspension members or mounting points, or tearing of metal structures, excluding floorpan stiffeners (Note 1).

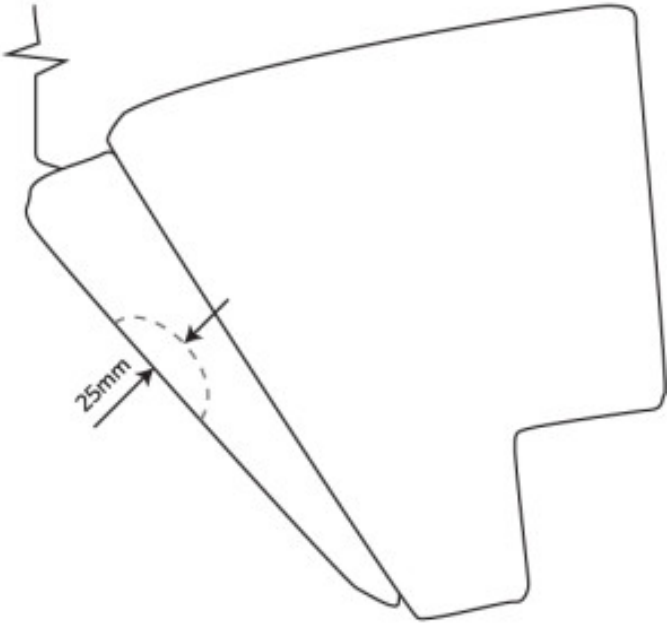
Note 1

When distinguishing between floorpan stiffening members and cross-members, note that a member that runs through the line of a seat or occupant area will not be an energy absorbing member (ie its purpose is to reinforce the floorpan), while a member that runs alongside a seat or occupant area should be treated as an energy absorbing member (ie a chassis rail).

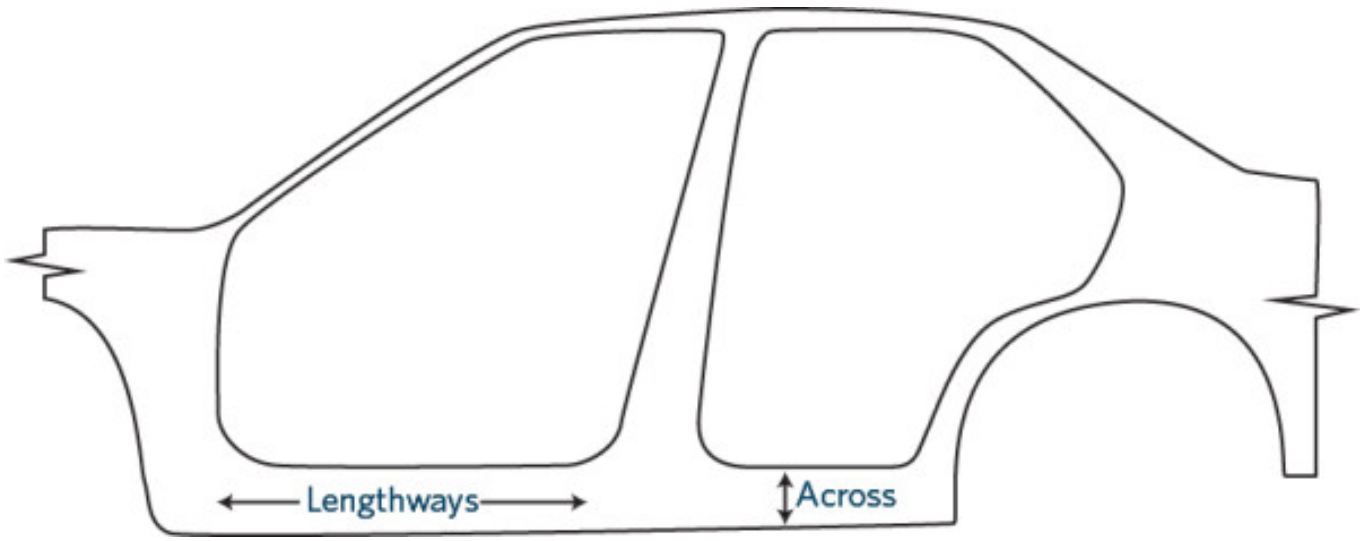
Denting or distortion

- A vehicle must be reported if there is any discernible denting or distortion to the folds or swages in the dog leg, sill panel or structure of the inner/outer sill weld seam, other than minor scraping.
- A vehicle must be reported if rocker panels (outer sills) are dented or creased lengthways along the sill and the depth of the crease exceeds 25mm.
- A vehicle must be reported if rocker panels (outer sills) are vertically dented or creased across the sill regardless of the depth of the crease or dent.

Outer sills cross section and rocker panels



Cross section of door sill



Crush zones and kick-up areas

A vehicle must be reported if there is distortion of the longitudinal rails affecting the front and rear crush zones and kick-up areas.

Crossmembers

A vehicle must be reported if there is denting or distortion of the crossmember as a result of collision with an object.

Cracking

A vehicle must be reported if there is cracking in:

- the unibody chassis
- any crossmembers and subframes
- a load bearing member, or energy management paths in unibody structures
- the body of a vehicle with a body-over-frame chassis in the energy management paths, engine mounts, suspension mounts, body mounts, pillars, or sills.

Repaired damage

A vehicle must be reported if signs of fresh repair, rust prevention, acid wash

(see **Technical bulletin 4: Acid wash process on used imports**),

or under-sealing to any part of the vehicle structure are evident.

Supplementary Restraint System (SRS): Airbags and seatbelt pretensioners

A vehicle must be reported if it has a deployed airbag or seatbelt pretensioner, or there is evidence of repairs to or tampering with airbag module covers. (including colour variations in plastic covers to steering wheels, dash panels, interior trim, or non-original stitching to seat mounted airbags). A vehicle must be reported if the SRS warning light stays illuminated when the engine is running.

Water damage, fire damage or other written off vehicles

A vehicle must be reported if there is evidence that it has suffered water damage, fire damage or the veicle has been written off (Note 2).

Note 2

For the purposes of the border inspection, evidence of water or fire damage may be physical evidence, or it may be that the vehicle has been written-off for insurance purposes as a result of water, fire >or other damage.

Corrosion Damage

- Corrosion damage is where the metal has been eaten away, which is evident by pitting. The outward signs of such corrosion damage are typically displayed by the swelling of a panel between spot welds, or lifting or bubbling of paint. In extreme cases, the area affected by the corrosion damage will fall out and leave a hole.

  A vehicle must be reported if there is corrosion damage in any structural area, as indicated in the shaded areas of Figure 1-1-1.

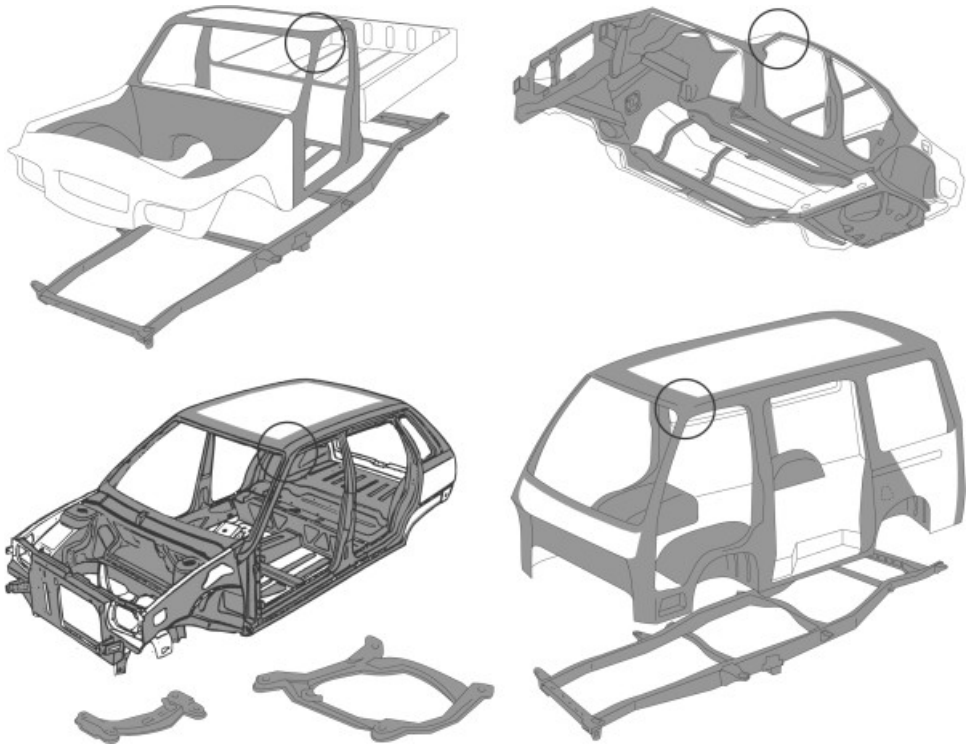
Note 3

For the purposes of the border inspection, corrosion damage includes any signs of ‘rust bleed’. Rust bleed is a rust coloured stain or mark that appears around an area of corrosion that may not be visible. Rust bleed is most commonly found where panels join or overlap when corrosion has started between the two surfaces and moisture has caused a rust stain or mark to run onto the external surface.

- Perforated corrosion is where the metal is corroded to the extent that it has holes, or holes are exposed when rust scale is removed. If metal is badly pitted causing a loss of metal thickness it must also be treated as perforated corrosion.

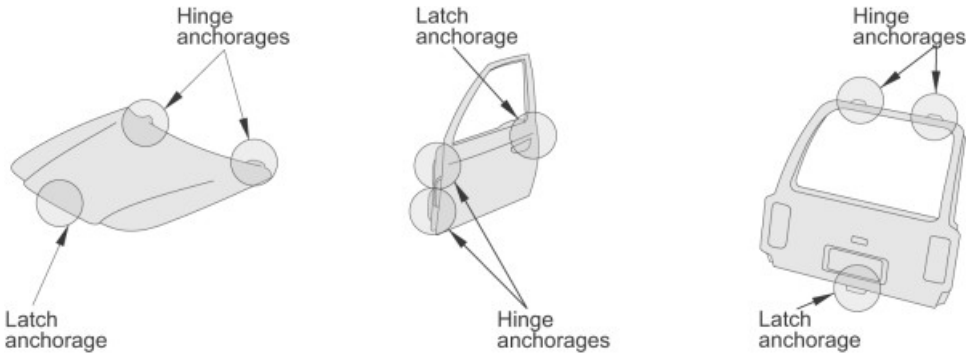
If there is perforated corrosion in any other (non-structural) area, as indicated in the non-shaded areas of Figure 1-1-1, the vehicle requires to be reported.

Figure 1-1-1. Structural corrosion damage limits



Corrosion, or the repair of corrosion on ‘bolt on’ parts (doors, bonnets, and boot lids) within a 150mmcircle around the outside of hinge or latch components will require to be reported. These ‘no corrosion’ zones are circled in Figure 1-1-2.

Figure 1-1-2. Hinge and latch anchorage corrosion damage limits



7 Cosmetic damage

Cosmetic damage to the motor vehicle's outer body panels is permitted, providing it does not affect the structural integrity of chassis, the energy management paths, or any of the bonded or welded seams or joints as a result of the manufacturing process.

Cosmetic parts on a unibody chassis are generally bolt on items such as the front guard, boot-lid, and in most cases the doors.

Photographs illustrating examples of cosmetic damage are shown in **Reference material 6**

Inspection

A list of specific types of damage follows. It explains the extent to which damage is allowed before a vehicle must be reported.

Underbody impact damage

- A vehicle does not require reporting if it has minor underbody impact damage as a result of 'grounding' the vehicle or some scraping of the sill seams.
- A vehicle does not require reporting if there is crushing or tearing of floorpan stiffening members (Note 4), provided it does not affect any internal cross-members designed for side-impact protection.

Note 4

When distinguishing between floorpan stiffening members and cross-members, note that a member that runs through the line of a seat or occupant area will not be an energy absorbing member (ie its purpose is to reinforce the floorpan), while a member that runs alongside a seat or occupant area should be treated as an energy absorbing member (ie a chassis rail).

Denting or distortion

A vehicle does not require reporting if rocker panels (outer sills) are dented or creased lengthways along the sill to a depth of less than 25mm.

Cross-members

A vehicle does not require reporting if it has minor jacking damage to a cross-member, provided there is no indication of loss of steering or suspension alignment.

Repaired damage

A vehicle with repaired damage does not require reporting if repairs are only to correct cosmetic damage to the outer body panels, provided the vehicle inspector is able to discern the extent of the damage and confirm that none of the vehicle manufacturer's seams or joints have been disturbed during the repair.

Entry vehicles with known corrosion problems

Mitsubishi

Diamante:Floor/front strut towers

Legnum: Under body/Strut towers

Lancer Evo: Rear rails

Delica van: Front rails

Nissan

Safari: Floor/front and rear cross members/radiator support panels

Terrano: Floor area

Mistral: Floor area

Pulsar: Under body and inner floor/sill joint

Mazda

Demio: Front cross member

MPV: Rear chassis rail

8 Ancillary Procedures

Doubt regarding damage status

If after completing the check on the vehicle there is any doubt whether to report the damage found,

IF IN DOUBT, REPORT THE DAMAGE

Exceptions to flagging of structural parts

The front windscreen and all other glass is a structural part in the Unibody chassis, and modern (light) Body-over-frame chassis. For the purpose of entry-level inspection, the glass is not to be flagged as a damaged structural item, unless the cause of the windscreen damage can be attributed to airbag deployment or other structural damage that must also be flagged.

Page amended **5 May 2025** (see **amendment details**)