

**Correct as at 14th May 2026. It may be superseded at any time.**

**Extract taken from:** Border inspection of imported used vehicles > Introduction > The border inspection process

## **3 The border inspection process**

In order to inspect a vehicle at the border the vehicle inspector and inspecting organisation must take the following steps:

1. Know the vehicle inspector's and inspecting organisation's responsibilities. Part 3.1 of this section lists the legal responsibilities. The vehicle inspector and inspecting organisation must read and understand them.
2. Establish whether the vehicle requires a border inspection. Part 3.2 of this section explains how to determine if a vehicle requires a border inspection.
3. Establish whether the vehicle with damage needs to be flagged. Part 3.4 of this section explains how to determine if a vehicle needs to be flagged with damage.
4. Complete the required inspection documentation. Part 3.5 of this section explains the requirements for handling of photographs and completing check sheets.
5. Record the inspection outcome. Part 3.6 of this section explains how to notify the Transport Agency of the information collected at the Border Inspection.
6. Collect fees. Part 3.9 of this section lists the requirements for the inspecting organisation when charging and collecting fees.

### **3.1 General duties and responsibilities**

**Applicable legislation:** [Land Transport Rule: Vehicle Standards Compliance 2002](#) (Rule 35001/1) ('the Rule')

#### **3.1.1 Vehicle inspectors and inspecting organisations (definitions in the Rule)**

Vehicle inspector means an individual appointed by the Transport Agency under section 2.2(1) of the Rule to carry out inspection activities in accordance with requirements and conditions imposed by the Transport Agency.

Inspecting organisation means a person or organisation appointed by the Transport Agency under section 2.2(1) of the Rule who is responsible for inspection outcomes.

In this manual, a vehicle inspector or inspecting organisation is appointed for the purpose of border inspection of imported used vehicles, unless stated otherwise.

To avoid doubt, any reference to a certifier in any legislation, notice of appointment, or any other relevant document is a reference to a vehicle inspector or inspecting organisation (as applicable) appointed by the Transport Agency under the Rule.

#### **3.1.2 Document retention (section 2.3(4) of the Rule)**

A vehicle inspector or inspecting organisation must:

- a) keep, for at least five years, the original of any documents that have been collected in the inspection process

#### **3.1.3 Advise incorrect inspection and/or vehicle defects (section 2.3(4) of the Rule)**

A vehicle inspector or inspecting organisation must:

a) advise the Transport Agency as soon as practicable if there is a reason to believe that the inspection of a vehicle has been carried out incorrectly

### 3.1.4 Delegation (section 2.4(1) of the Rule)

A vehicle inspector or inspecting organisation may not delegate any function or power to carry out inspection activities for which they were appointed, except under conditions specified by the Transport Agency in writing.

The only tasks that may be delegated to non-approved staff are administrative processes such as recording vehicle attributes or removing and replacing components to enable the inspection process to be carried out.

## 3.2 Establishing whether a vehicle is required to have a border inspection

The inspection organisation will ensure that all used vehicles imported into New Zealand for the purpose of registration are inspected at the border before they are released to the owner/importer. The only exceptions are:

- a) New vehicles
- b) Vehicles imported by a person who is approved by the Transport Agency in accordance with the relevant Regulation, or Rule as a certifier for vehicles of that make
- c) Overseas visitors' vehicles (imported temporarily with overseas registration)
- d) Vehicles returning to New Zealand that have current New Zealand registration
- e) Vehicles that the owner declares are not going to be registered in New Zealand
- f) Vehicles that are described in section 6.1 of the Land Transport Rule: Vehicle Standards Compliance 2002, that is:
  - vehicles of class AB, TA or TB
  - armoured vehicles used exclusively as equipment of the New Zealand Defence Force
  - traction engines
  - mechanically propelled rollers
  - tractors (other than agricultural tractors) and machines, including trailers, for use solely in non-agricultural land management or roading operations, whether for traction or otherwise
  - agricultural motor vehicles
  - vehicles registered for use on a road in a country other than New Zealand that are not going to be in New Zealand for a continuous period of more than 18 months

(see [VIRM: Entry certification Technical bulletin 5 – Inspection requirements for temporary vehicle imports](#))

- vehicles listed below:
  - a) pedestrian-controlled goods service vehicles
  - b) vehicles propelled and supported solely by self-laying tracks
  - c) vehicles used on roads only in road construction zones in accordance with notices declaring those zones
  - d) vehicles that are used on a road only when crossing or proceeding along a section of the road where the vehicles have been authorised to operate by an authorisation of a road-controlling authority that requires:
    - i. a written agreement by the vehicle's operator or the person for whom the vehicle is being operated, to construct, reconstruct, maintain, or restore to the satisfaction of the road-controlling authority all or part of the road used by the vehicle, and

- ii. the erection and maintenance of warning devices, signs or control devices as required by the road-controlling authority and the director, and
  - iii. where the use of the road does not consist solely of the direct crossing of the road, the prior approval of the NZ Transport Agency
- e) all-terrain vehicles that are used on a public highway
- f) motor vehicles exclusively designed and used on a road for driving, carrying or propelling any of the following, which must be permanently attached to the vehicle:
  - i. aerodrome runway sweepers
  - ii. electrical substations
  - iii. filters for transformer oil
  - iv. log haulers that are stationary when hauling logs
  - v. aero engine test benches
- g) tractors owned by a local authority and used exclusively for the construction, maintenance or mowing of stopbanks and the banks of rivers, streams, drains, canals or other watercourses
- h) mobile or movable huts, galleys or similar motor vehicles that are used on a road solely in connection with the construction or maintenance of roads
- i) tractors used exclusively for shunting railway rolling stock
- j) traction engines
- k) forklifts
- l) aerodrome crash fire tenders that are used on a road only in emergencies
- m) trailers while being drawn by a motor vehicle specified in (n) to (s) of this schedule
- n) motor vehicles, used exclusively in connection with the embarking and disembarking of ships' passengers or for loading and unloading ships' mail, cargo, and passengers' baggage, and used on a public highway only when proceeding unladen from one wharf to another wharf or from its usual place of storage to a wharf and returning to that place of storage
- o) motor vehicles designed exclusively or principally as part of the armament of the New Zealand Defence Force
- p) cable jinkers
- q) front-end loaders
- r) log skidders
- s) tractor cranes
- t) rough-terrain cranes
- u) mobile crushing and screening plane machines, which are mounted on trailers
- v) motor graders
- w) motor scrapers
- x) trailer scrapers

- y) plant for servicing oil-filled cables
- z) post debarkers
- aa) saw bench apparatus
- bb) forestry chippers
- cc) tree feller bunchers
- dd) trench diggers and excavators
- ee) vehicles that are always used unladen on the road and that are designed exclusively for carrying earth or other bulk materials
- ff) mobile concrete mixers that are mounted on tractors
- gg) a vehicle that is similar in design, construction or purpose to a vehicle listed above that cannot be categorised by vehicle class.

## 3.3 Vehicle inspection

### 3.3.1 Inspecting a vehicle at the border (section 4.2 of the Rule)

The inspection of a vehicle at the border must be carried out in accordance with requirements and conditions imposed by the Transport Agency.

The vehicle inspection must be completed before a vehicle can be released from a customs-controlled area to the vehicle owner/importer. If the border inspection organisation wishes to use an alternative inspection procedure, they must contact the Transport Agency for prior approval.

From **21 May 2018** the vehicle inspection must include a check to see if the vehicle is on one of the lists of vehicles that must be damage flagged with notes recorded stating 'Open Airbag Recall'.

See [Technical bulletin 1: Takata airbag recall](#) for how to do this.

### 3.3.2 Information to be recorded at the border inspection (section 4.3 of the Rule)

A vehicle inspector or inspecting organisation must record and provide to the Transport Agency, or to other persons specified by the Transport Agency, the following information about a vehicle inspected.

- a) its make, model, and vehicle identification number or chassis number
- b) the name and address of its importer
- c) its odometer reading
- d) any obvious defects or damage identified in the inspection
- e) left-hand drive
- f) border inspection date
- g) ship name
- h) country of export and port of arrival
- i) inspection site and inspector ID.

**Note 1**

When recording the VIN/'other VIN' No. take the number from the manufacturer's stamp (into bodywork/chassis of the vehicle) or the manufacturer's ID plate.

**Note 2**

If it is not possible to record an odometer reading, write zeros in the odometer field on the check sheet.

**Note 3**

When checking the condition of the vehicle the following items shall be inspected but not necessarily in the order shown:

- Engine compartment
- Right side
- Luggage cargo compartment
- Left side
- Under body or chassis frame
- Passenger compartment.

**Note 4**

The vehicle inspector or inspecting organisation may refuse to inspect a vehicle because the vehicle is presented in such a condition that inspection is unreasonably difficult or cannot be completed (eg components covered in dirt, components missing etc), or

**Note 5**

Where the vehicle inspector requires further information in order to carry out an inspection, the inspector must reject the vehicle until the information has been obtained.

**Note 6**

The inspector ID is the person's initials, followed by a sequential number which identifies the inspector.

**Note 7**

Used vehicles (imported from Japan) that have had the vehicle identifier partially or totally removed cannot be border inspected for the NZTA unless the vehicle has been re-identified by the Japanese Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport (MLIT) and issued with an authentic Export Certificate that list the new identifiers.

### **3.4 Establishing whether a vehicle with damage needs to be flagged**

To establish whether a vehicle with damage needs to be flagged:

Refer to [Reference material 1](#) for guidelines for the detection of reportable damage on imported used vehicles.

## 3.5 Checksheets, photographs and affixing inspection sticker

All inspections shall be recorded on an electronic or paper-based checksheet that has the prescribed information and signed by the inspector.

See [Reference material 7a](#) or [Reference material 7b](#)

All locations where the inspector observes indications of structural damage or deterioration shall be recorded and photographed. In most cases two photographs (usually a wide shot showing the whole front, rear, or side of vehicle and under-body shot) of the damaged/deteriorated area and a close up shot is required. One photo is OK if the damaged/deteriorated area can be clearly identified and the extent of the damage is obvious. The inspector can use their discretion to determine how many photos are required. The maximum number of photographs required for any vehicle would be four.

If requested, a copy of the checksheet must be supplied to the vehicle owner.

At the completion of the inspection, affix an 'Border Inspected' sticker to the wiper arm on the driver's side of the vehicle.

## 3.6 Notification to the Transport Agency of the information collected at the border inspection

**3.6.1 When the inspection has been completed the inspection organisation will notify the NZTA's database.**

See [Reference material 2](#) for the data transfer process.

**3.6.2 On a vehicle where any damage or deterioration has been detected, the inspector will be required to attach a label (NZTA notice to the Importer).**

See [Reference material 3](#) for a sample of the label. The label must be placed on the inside of the windscreen in the bottom right hand corner (when sighted from the driver's seating position).

## 3.7 Vehicles presented for a border inspection after being released from customs

If a vehicle is presented for a border inspection after it has been released from customs there are additional requirements. Refer [Reference material 9](#) for the additional inspection requirements.

## 3.8 Disputes

If an importer disputes the decision to report or flag damage they may present the vehicle to an approved Transport Agency entry inspector or repair certifier for re-consideration.

If an importer or owner dispute arises: report the incident to Transport Agency immediately.

## 3.9 Collecting fees

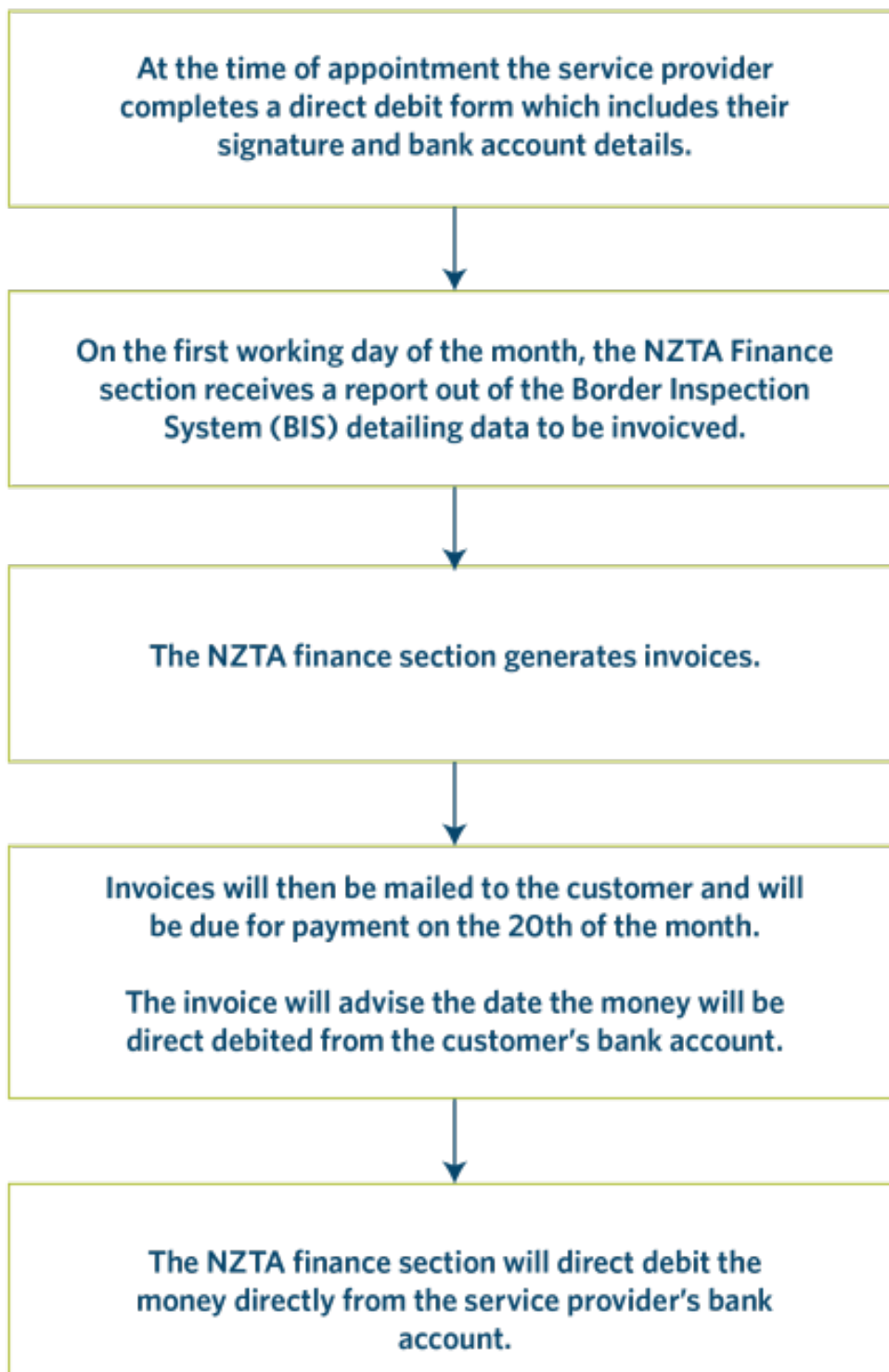
NZTA has a set regulatory fee for the border inspection process. The inspecting organisation will collect the **\$9.35** (incl. GST) fee as part of their invoice to the customer for the full inspection service.

[Land Transport \(Regulatory Fees\) Regulations 2023](#)

For inspections carried out offshore, the border inspection fee will not include GST and will be \$8.13 per vehicle.

The inspection organisation will be solely responsible for ensuring that the customer is charged the correct Transport Agency border inspection fee and that the fee is paid to the NZTA as specified in the flowchart below:

## Border check inspection: Invoicing procedure



**Note:** Accounts receivable are responsible for opening new customer accounts, invoicing and direct debiting. Customers requiring assistance can phone +64 4 890 4761 to speak a Finance Officer.