



CUSTOMER’S RIGHT TO AN ESTIMATE/KEY DROP BOXES

A customer’s right to an estimate is well known to both vendors and customers alike. In the motor vehicle repair industry, the customer’s right to an estimate is covered in the Ohio Administrative Code section dealing with motor vehicle repairs and services. Under the Ohio Administrative Code, a consumer has a right to an estimate for repairs or services. Until recently, an estimate was required for any work that was anticipated to cost more than \$25. However, as of August 10, that amount was increased to \$50.

Additionally, the Code sets forth certain disclosures and information that need to be provided to the customer before work can be performed.

The Ohio Revised Code requires that at the initial **face-to-face** contact with a consumer, the supplier must provide a form which lists (1) the date; (2) the identity of the supplier; (3) the consumer’s name and telephone number; (4) the anticipated completion date; and (5) if requested by the customer, the anticipated cost of the repair or service.

In addition to these disclosures, the supplier also must disclose to the consumer the right to an estimate. The language on the form must use language similar or substantially similar to the following:

ESTIMATE

You have the right to an estimate if the expected cost of the repairs or services will be more than \$50.00. Initial your choice:

_____ ***Written Estimate***

_____ ***Oral Estimate***

_____ ***No Estimate***



If the first contact with the consumer is over the phone, the shop is required to **verbally** inform the consumer of the right to the estimate.

Of course, the issue of providing these disclosures is simple when the customer and supplier have a face-to-face meeting at the outset of work being performed. However, in this day and age, having all of your customers bringing in their cars during normal business hours is simply not realistic. As a result, many motor vehicle repair facilities utilize key drops and night drop boxes where a customer can drop off the keys and their vehicle the evening before work is to be commenced. In these situations, then, the question is how does one comply with the Ohio Administrative Code and meet the requirements of making the disclosures.

Ohio Administrative Code Section 109:4-3-13 specifically addresses situations where a vehicle is dropped off during non-business hours. That section requires that a supplier make available to the consumer a form, **in duplicate**, with instructions directing the customer to retain a copy, which indicates the identity of the supplier and contains the following disclosures:

"Estimate

You have the right to an estimate of the cost of repairs or services which you are requesting. Your bill will not be higher than the estimate by more than ten per cent unless you approve a larger amount before repairs are finished. You can choose the kind of estimate you want to receive by signing your name under one of the following choices and indicating a telephone number where you can be reached if necessary:

(a) Written estimate

(Customer Signature)

(b) Oral estimate

(Customer Signature)

(c) No estimate

(Customer Signature)

Customer Name _____

Customer Telephone Number _____

Date: _____ "

Upon reviewing the form the shop then must comply with the request as listed on the form. If the customer requests a verbal estimate, the estimate must be provided before starting the repair or the service. This can be done over the telephone. If the customer at that time can also requests a written estimate, then all steps should be taken to prepare the written estimate and provide it to the customer **before** any work on the vehicle begins.

In situations where a customer drops off a vehicle after hours, shops must make a form available near the night drop box. Care should also be taken to notify the customer to complete the form and leave a copy with the facility. These forms should be located in an area where the consumer will not miss them or overlook them when dropping off the keys in the night drop box area.

Failure to provide these forms as will be construed as a failure to comply with the Ohio Administrative Code, which could result in legal and potential civil penalties.

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