

CERTIFICATE OF TITLE FOR A MOTOR VEHICLE

This is the procedure you must follow when you wish to obtain a certificate of title to a motor vehicle. A key part of this procedure is to notify the last known owner and any bank, company or person that holds a lien ("lienholder") on the vehicle before title can be awarded to you.

Section 1 - Last known vehicle owner

If you do not know the name and address of the vehicle's owner and any lienholder, you **must** complete Step 1 and Step 2 in Section 1.

If you have the vehicle owner's information proceed to Section 2 - Petition for Certificate of Title.

Step 1. Motor vehicle's owner record

- To obtain a certified copy of the motor vehicle's owner record complete form **DL-135** located at <http://www.dot.state.pa.us/Public/DVSPubsForms/BDL/BDL%20Form/DL-135.pdf>
- Follow PennDOT's instructions page 2 of the DL-135 form

Step 2. Response from PennDOT

You will receive a response from PennDOT.

- If the information you receive **does not provide the name of a person with an interest** in the motor vehicle, then you must obtain the history of the vehicle from a commercial source.
 - If the information you receive **includes the name of a lienholder** that still may be owed money on a loan, you must:
 - Serve that lienholder and give them written notice of date and time of your hearing on the Petition.
- OR
- Obtain the lienholder's written, signed and notarized approval to have the title awarded to you and take the original approval to your hearing.

Section 2 - Petition for Certificate of Title

Step 1. Form Preparation

- Complete the following form and print one (1) copy. Do not print on both sides of the paper.
 - Petition for Certificate of Title

Step 2. Signature

- Sign and date the completed form from Step 1 that requires your signature.

Section 3 - Lehigh County Courthouse

- Take the following items with you to the Lehigh County Courthouse located at 455 West Hamilton Street Allentown, PA:
 - Completed and signed Petition for Certificate of Title
 - Any documentation proving ownership of vehicle
 - Any documentation from PennDOT
 - Any Vehicle History documentation obtained from a commercial source
 - Cash or Credit/Debit Card to cover filing fees; no personal checks will be accepted.
For filing fees see <https://www.lccpa.org/civil/CivilCourtFees.pdf>

Step 1. Requesting a Hearing from Court Administration

Go to the Office of Court Administration located in Room 614 of the Lehigh County Courthouse:

- Give the Petition for Certificate of Title and any documentation proving ownership to an employee of the Office of Court Administration. They will prepare an order scheduling a hearing ("Scheduling Order") and give you that order to e-file with your petition.

Step 2. Filing – Clerk of Judicial Records

Go to the Clerk of Judicial Records located in Room 122 of Lehigh County Courthouse:

- Give all paperwork to the Clerk and pay for all filing fees.
- Proceed to Kiosk to e-file original document. Print three (3) time-stamped copies.
 - Keep one (1) copy for your records.
 - One (1) copy is to be mailed to the last known address of the last known owner by certified mail return receipt requested, restricted delivery.
 - One (1) copy to any person or company that holds a lien on the motor vehicle (“Lienholder”), by certified mail, return receipt requested, restricted delivery.

Section 4 - Serving last known owner

Manner of Service

To use these Self-help forms, the manner of service must be **Certified mail, return receipt requested, restricted delivery.**

Step 1. Preparing Petition for Certificate of Title for Service

- Address one (1) envelope to the last known owner of the motor vehicle.
- Address one (1) envelope to any bank, company or person that holds a lien ("lienholder") on the motor vehicle.
- Put the following in each of the addressed envelopes:
 - One (1) time-stamped copy of the Petition for Certificate of Title
 - One (1) time-stamped copy of the Scheduling Order

Step 2. Going to the Post Office

- Take this Checklist with you.
- Take addressed envelope containing the copies of the Petition for Certificate of Title and the Scheduling Order.
- Take money for postage.

Step 3. Completing Domestic Return Receipt (green post card Form 3811)

- At the post office, obtain two (2) Domestic Return Receipts (green post card Form 3811).
- Complete Reverse side on both of the Domestic Return Receipt (green post card Form 3811) so it will be returned to you as proof of service.
- Section 1 Article Addressed to:
 - One card addressed to the last known owner of the motor vehicle
 - One card addressed to any bank, company or person that holds a lien ("lienholder")
- Section 2 Article Number: Write or stick Certified Mail Receipt Number
- Section 3 Service Type: Check Certified Mail check box
- Section 4 Restricted Delivery?: Check **Yes**

- Pay postage and Mail

Step 4. Wait for green post card form 3811 to be returned to you.

- If either of your certified mailings are returned as “unclaimed”, proceed to Section 5.
- If your certified mailings are returned as “claimed”, proceed to Section 6

Section 5 - Unclaimed Certified Mail - Notice of Publication

Because your certified mailing was returned as unclaimed you now must publish a Notice.

Step 1. Legal Journal Advertising

- Advertise a legal notice with proof of publication at least one (1) time in the legal journal of the county of the last known address for the last known owner and any lienholder.
 - Notice must contain the following information:
 - a specific description of the motor vehicle (year, make, model and Vehicle Identification Number);
 - the fact that the proceeding has commenced in the Court of Common Pleas of Lehigh County; and
 - the date, time, place (include the specific courtroom) of the hearing set forth in the Scheduling Order.

Step 2. Newspaper Advertising

- Advertise a legal notice with proof of publication at least one (1) time per week for three (3) consecutive weeks in a newspaper of general circulation where any person known to claim an interest in the motor vehicle may be located and where the motor vehicle is located.
 - Notice must contain the following information:
 - a specific description of the motor vehicle (year, make, model and Vehicle Identification Number);
 - the fact that the proceeding has commenced in the Court of Common Pleas of Lehigh County; and
 - the date, time, place (include the specific courtroom) of the hearing set forth in the Scheduling Order.

Section 6 - Hearing

- Dress appropriately. The Court recommends that you dress as if you were attending a formal interview.
- Arrive 15 minutes before your scheduled hearing.
- Take your copy of the Petition and the following items with you to the Courthouse:
 - All returned “claimed” green post cards (Domestic Return Receipt Form 3811) from the last known owner and Lienholder
 - If any green post card (Domestic Return Receipt Form 3811) certified mail return receipt cards are returned “unclaimed”, provide copies of the notice and Proof of Publication from all advertising sources.
 - Any original signed and notarized written approval from the lienholder to have the title awarded to you.
- Check in with Court Staff at assigned Courtroom
- When your case is called, present the court with the documents listed above

Section 7 - Court order

- If the Court grants your Petition, it will enter an Order.
- Once the Order is filed you, will need to obtain a certified copy from the Clerk of Judicial Records located in Room 122 of Lehigh County Courthouse.
- Complete MV-217 form. <http://www.dot.state.pa.us/Public/DVSPubsForms/BMV/BMV%20Forms/mv-217.pdf>
- Attach court order to form MV-217 and submit to PennDOT.