

Claims 'How To' Motor Total Loss

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WHAT IS A TOTAL LOSS

A total loss or write off occurs when the cost to repair your damaged vehicle is higher than its market value.

Total loss does not necessarily mean that the vehicle is incapable of repair but simply that it is not economic to repair your vehicle.

The insurer will determine the pre-accident value. This is based off age, mileage, and overall condition and then calculate how much it would cost to repair your car.

WHICH CARS ARE REPAIRABLE

Most insurers use a shared salvage code of practice which categorises vehicles by their damage. These categories are as follows;

CATEGORY A: SCRAP

Not suitable for repair, must be crushed with no parts removed, generally this arises if a vehicle is burned out or completely destroyed

CATEGORY B: BREAK

Vehicle is deemed not suitable to be repaired but there may be salvageable parts that can be recycled, the structure of the vehicle must be crushed.

CATEGORY S: REPAIRABLE STRUCTURAL

The vehicle has sustained damage to any part of the structural frame or chassis, for instance front/rear wings, sills, bulkheads or A+B posts. While the vehicle is capable of repair it is deemed more expensive than the value of the vehicle.

CATEGORY N: REPAIRABLE NON-STRUCTURAL

Vehicle does not have structural damage but repairs still exceed value, it could be that safety-critical elements such as steering, brakes or suspension are affected.

The pre accident value is a key consideration, as even a vehicle with minor damage if old, high in mileage or in a poor condition could be deemed a category N and written off.

Assessment of a vehicle generally is carried out at an approved repairer or salvage yard if your vehicle has been recovered there, however, it can also be a determination made based on your non approved repair estimate.

If a total loss appears likely it is recommended that driver property and personal effects are removed as soon as possible as the vehicle may end up at a remote location.

INFORMATION NEEDED

Ideally the insurer will require the following:

Original Vehicle Registration Document (V5

Original MOT certificate (if applicable)

Full service history if available

Original purchase receipt or proof of funding for the vehicle

Full details of any lease, contract or Hire Purchase Agreement, including the Agreement number and early settlement figure.

The approximate mileage at the time of the loss

Confirm of the location of all sets of keys

VALUE DISPUTE

If a dispute occurs over the value of the stolen vehicle, try to find examples of comparable vehicles using website searches to show what you consider market value should be. If there are any extras to your vehicle or recent value affecting changes such as new tyres ensure receipts and evidence are provided to assist.

SETTLEMENT

Insurers will generally cash settle a total loss up to market value (subject to policy terms). If subject to finance, this will be settled first, with any remaining value paid to you.

TELL THE DVLA

If the insurer settles your claim as a write off you must advise the DVLA that the vehicle has been "sold" to the insurance company.

The DVLA can be advised online or by sending them the yellow 'sell, transfer or part-exchange your vehicle to the motor trade' section of your vehicle log book. Send the appropriate section to DVLA, with a letter saying when the payment was accepted and details of your insurance company.

You'll need to give the remaining part of your log book to your insurance company. If your insurance company asks for the whole log book then you'll need to send a letter to DVLA including:

- The details of your insurance company
- The date of the claim
- Your registration number
- The make, model and colour of your vehicle
- Your signature

Send your letter to:
DVLA, Swansea, SA99 1BD.

