

Registering your Kit Car – SB100

To most, registering your kit car is probably the most frightening thing you can think of short of taxes. In California, all new construction vehicles are registered as “Specialty Constructed Vehicles” (SPCNS) which includes hand built, kit cars and replicas built for personal use (see DMV definition at <http://www.dmv.ca.gov/pubs/vctop/d01/vc580.htm>). Registering your car is not that difficult but the key for those of us with performance in mind is in the classifying of your vehicle by the Bureau of Automotive Repair (BAR) with regard to the smog requirements. Fifteen years ago when I registered my last car, a Cobra, the smog requirement was set by the State BAR Referee based on the year of the motor which for me at the time was a 1969 Ford 429ci. With that year motor I had to meet all requirements for 1969 which included passing the sniffer and a visual inspection to make sure all equipment pertinent to that year motor was in place. For 1969 it was basically detuning the motors timing and installing the factory air cleaner with the hot air tube. I purposely didn’t build the motor “hot” so I had no problem doing this every other year and being perfectly legal while also enjoying my ride. Of course this doesn’t work with “hot” motors or most of the crate motors from today’s performance builders like Smeding, Rousch, or any of the Car Manufacturers. Back then it was common to “skirt” the law and the number of ways to do that could be a book in itself, with some as radical as having a spare motor that was installed every two years just to pass smog!

All of that changed with the passing of Senate Bill 100 in 2001. With SB100, owners could now apply for one of 500 SPCNS Certificate of Sequence issued yearly which would allow the owner to “smog” classify their vehicle based on either the model-year of the engine used in the vehicle or the vehicle model-year as represented by the replica year. One off customs that cannot adequately be classified as above will be assigned a 1960 year designation (<http://www.dmv.ca.gov/vr/spcns.htm>). A note though... on a given year the state of California does not need to issue the total of 500 Certificates allowed in the bill. The number can be anywhere from 0 to 500 and they are usually all issued by noon on the first business day of the year. Having an SPCNS Certificate of Sequence does not alter the normal registration process – it only affects the assigning of a smog designation. SPCNS Certificate of Sequences can also be used by existing registered cars to change their smog status. So a Meyer’s Manx registered in 1984 could re-apply with a Sequence number and change their smog designation today, so for those people swapping engines every two years to pass smog it would make their life so much easier.

Ok, hopefully you’ve been saving all the receipts for the major components of your car AND received a Manufacturers Certificate of Origin from the maker of the kit you bought. The registration process starts on the first business day of the year in which you expect to have your car drivable. I didn’t say 100% complete as our cars never seem to get there but drivable.

On the first business day of the New Year that the Department of Motor Vehicles is open you will need to be there to secure one of the precious SPCNS Certificate of Sequence numbers. They are assigned on a first come, first served basis and all come out of Sacramento. The personnel at your particular DMV call to Sacramento to secure the numbers so the idea is to be there with all your

paperwork first. I actually was at the DMV at 4:30AM on January 2nd to await the doors opening at 9am. Needless to say I was first in line. There were six other people with me that morning with the last guy arriving at 8am, and he got his number with no problem so use your best judgment on when to get there.

Be prepared! You will absolutely need the following items for your trip to the DMV.

1. You will need the following receipts from your build.
 - a. For the Kit which hopefully included the frame and body (otherwise you'll need separate receipts for each)
 - b. The Motor. If from a private party than a Bill of Sale with the persons address and phone number.
 - c. The transmission
 - d. An idea of the base value of the car – the DMV uses this for determining the yearly registration fee and in some cases the state tax to charge you if you bought it out of state (this later part seems to be random based on who at DMV does your paperwork or possibly some other variable I don't know about). I brought my expandaflex file with all my receipts and a spreadsheet that totaled the major stuff. The DMV loves paperwork. If you try to lowball them on this they will catch you eventually – See Boyd Coddington vrs the State of California problems.
2. A filled out “Application for Title or Registration” – Form DMV REG 343
<http://www.dmv.ca.gov/forms/reg/reg343.htm>
3. A filled out “Statement of Construction” – Form DMV REG 5036
<http://www.dmv.ca.gov/forms/reg/reg5036.htm>
4. Manufacturers Certificate of Origin

If you're there with everything filled out and ready it goes fairly quick. The DMV personnel will initiate a registration for your vehicle giving it an identity in the database. They will assign the Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) probably based on the kit's serial number – this might get changed by the Highway Patrol later. You will be asked to take a seat – don't worry; your name didn't come up on a “wanted” list or anything – while the clerk starts calling Sacramento to obtain your SB100 number. They will collect the first year's registration fee based on the value of the car that you give them plus the normal DMV fees and will then give you final instructions to complete the registration process along with a temporary operating permit. You're home free once you have the number and you have the entire year to complete the registration process. The official SPCNS Certificate of Sequence comes in the mail about two to three weeks later – guard it with your life!

To complete the registration process you will need to survive the three “trials of mechanism” which will test your will. More on that next time as you need to start figuring out what time to get up on January 2nd for the immediate future.