



private use, not for resale, and is not constructed by a licensed manufacturer or remanufacturer. A specially constructed vehicle may be built from (1) a kit; (2) new or used, or a combination of new and used, parts; or (3) a vehicle reported for dismantling, as required by Section 5500 or 11520, which, when reconstructed, does not resemble the original make of the vehicle dismantled. A specially constructed vehicle is not a vehicle which has been repaired or restored to its original design by replacing parts..."

So, technically, if your car was built by a manufacturer (for instance, Shelby American, Inc. claims to be a licensed automobile manufacturer (Shelby Series One)) then you can't register it as a Specially Constructed Vehicle; and these cars should meet all of the criteria from the DOT for a brand new car (like SRS/air bags, 5 MPH bumpers, seat belts, anti-lock brakes, anti-intrusion beams, and - most importantly - they should have brand new engines with all the necessary smog and noise abatement equipment on them).

You have to have built your car, or had it built for private use by someone other than a licensed manufacturer or remanufacturer.

SB100

Perhaps the single greatest contribution to the California kit car builder comes from Senator K. Maurice Johannessen, who penned SB1911 (struck down by the California Air Resources Board...although Gov. Davis - in a letter that contained exactly the verbage of a letter from CARB - said he would not sign the bill), and then refurbished it to be SB100. The differences between the bills being that SB100 limits the number of cars that can be registered to 500; the previous bill had no such restriction.

The newer - and passed! - legislation allows private builders to register their cars as smog exempt - assuming that you meet all of the necessary criteria.

In a nutshell, SB100 allows you to register your car as a BRAND NEW car (called a 'SPCN'), with a 1965 smog exemption. Do not attempt to register your kit in California with a bogus Alabama title, or sneak past the DMV...they'll eventually find you and impound your car. And if you signed any paper making any kind of bogus claim...well, you sign all of those papers "under penalty of perjury," which could mean jail time. Don't lose your car, don't go to jail, just follow the steps outlined below.

What California Is Looking For

First and foremost, the DMV isn't looking to keep your car off the road. I'm sure that if you could drive it, they'd license a tree. What they are interested in is getting their fees. This is the most important part of the whole license process, and the part that seems to throw up the most red flags. Red flags are bad. How you can avoid getting in any trouble is to be able to give an accurate number when asked how much your car costs. Don't say it's been in storage for years. Don't say you got it for an absurdly low amount of money. The DMV - contrary to every counter person I've ever had to deal with at any of the local offices - isn't stupid. Bring receipts, documents that show how, where and for how much you purchased parts for, etc. A good median line for Cobras is between \$25,000 and \$50,000. Be prepared to pay title, tax and licensing fees on that amount.

The Hoops You Must Jump Through To Get Registered

The new SB100 law allows the first 500 people per year to pretty much fly through the registration process. If you pay attention to what I write, California registration is absurdly easy.... Just make sure that you have all of the necessary documentation with you and ready when you go to the DMV, and make sure the person you're talking to at the DMV is fully aware of what a kit car is (SPCN), and that they know all about SB100.

Registration in California is fairly straightforward. There are a number of steps that have to be taken, some forms that have to be filled out, and an inspection or two to go through.

I have found that it's always best to bring down everything you can possibly imagine when registering your car. Be over-prepared. Be organized. And don't forget to bring your checkbook!

California Vehicle Code, as it relates to replicas, reads:

"...Section 580. A "specially constructed vehicle" is a vehicle which is built for

Preparation:

Get a 1-gallon zip-lock plastic baggie. You'll need this to hold all of your paperwork. Do not use a file folder. The reasoning behind this is based on eight separate registrations I've done; you have to keep all of the paperwork with the car at all times that it's on the street until such time as you complete the entire registration process. Putting the paperwork in a zip-lock baggie prevents it from (a) slipping out of the folder or blowing out of the car; and (b) it keeps it from getting wet in the event you are driving the car in inclement weather. Papers will fall out of the folder. And you may lose them. That would be bad. Listen to Meat: use a baggie. Oh, and the one gallon baggie isn't quite exactly big enough to hold all the papers, so fold them in half and zip the baggie closed when it's in the car.

Step 1: Initial DMV Visit

Make sure you've emptied your bladder before you go, this will be the longest trip. It's also the most important trip, since it will set up your car in the DMV computer. Do have everything in order. Do have your receipts. Do pay close attention to what the clerk is entering into the computer in reference to your car. They have been known to make mistakes. While these mistakes can usually be corrected, I personally dislike spending too much time in the DMV, and since I'm registering a car that is open to interpretation depending on the attitude and knowledge of the clerk I just want to put on one show and then retire.

If you can, schedule an appointment. If not, don't come in with a chip on your shoulder. Be cheerful and happy to have spent most of the day in line. Don't tell the clerk how to do their job.

You'll need to have an "Application for Registration" and a "Statement of Facts" form filled out. Both of these forms are available from the DMV. On the "Statement of Facts" form, make sure you fill out the "Vehicle Construction Statement as well as the back of the Statement of Facts form.

Additionally, make sure that you visit the DMV site page that is specifically for Specially Constructed Vehicles (<http://www.dmv.ca.gov/vr/spcns.htm>). Also, make sure that the clerk doing the input had the DMV memorandum book open in front of them. **There is a specific memo that is related to SB100, it's VR-2002-25. The clerk MUST read this, and understand it. If they are unwilling to get the book, ask to see the supervisor. This memo tells the clerk EXACTLY how to input the information into the computer.**

Make sure that the clerk enters the information correctly, and that the vehicle is set up as a current model year SPCN. It's very important that they also assign you a SB100 number - the only way they can get the SB100 number is to call Sacramento. Do not leave the DMV without your SB100 number!!!

In order to get a temporary VIN number into the computer, you must bring down the Manufacturers Statement of Origin (the "MSO" which should have been generated by the kit manufacturer and shipped to you with your kit).

On the Statement of Facts form, make sure you mention that you built the car.

Now get out your checkbook and write a big fat check.

This will complete the first step, and you will now have a SB100 number, a temporary VIN number, and - most important - you'll have a big pink sticker to put on your windshield that will allow you to legally drive your car on the street for a few months!

Step 2: Visiting the CHP

You have to set an appointment to visit the CHP. There is no central number to set the appointment, you simply call the office closest to you, and tell them that you have a kit car that needs to have a VIN number assigned to it per SB100.

This is actually the most time-consuming part. Not because it's hard, but because most CHP offices have a waiting list. You'll spend most of the time after you leave the DMV (step one) waiting to go to the CHP appointment! It usually takes a month or so to get an opening.

Take all of the paperwork the DMV gave you and show up promptly for your appointment. Make sure that you have receipts showing every VIN number for the engine, transmission, etc. You must have a bill of sale for all of these parts. The CHP checks the Big CHP Computer for stolen parts.

The CHP will look over your paperwork, make sure you don't have any stolen parts on the car, and then they will get a new VIN number from the State, and affix a tamper-proof VIN number plate to your car. I would recommend that you find a nice place to put the VIN number before you get to the BAR. Don't let them attach the VIN number to a fiberglass part of the car, have them attach the VIN number to a chassis or frame rail. Some place it can be easily read, but not mounted on a part of the car that can be removed.

Once you have the VIN number, you can set an appointment to visit the BAR and get your car smogged. Make sure that the CHP completed the proper paperwork, and put it back in your baggie.

Step 3: Visiting the BAR (Bureau of Automotive Repair)

To set an appointment with the BAR, you have to call the Sacramento office. You cannot take the car down to a local smog station. **To set the appointment, call: (800) 622-7733 - YOU CANNOT SET AN APPOINTMENT UNTIL THE CHP ISSUES YOU A VIN NUMBER.** They will give you a few local BAR stations to go to. Make sure that you tell them that you're registering a kit car for the first time under SB100. The reason you want to tell them this is because the referee has to inspect your car, and the regional manager guy has to be there, too. The total inspection time they set up for you will be about two hours. The actual time it takes to smog the car is about 20 minutes.

When you show up for your appointment, make sure that you have all of your fluids topped off. The BAR will not look at your car unless it has the proper amount of coolant and oil.

There are two ways to smog your car under SB100. One is by the year of the engine - which is fine if you have all of your smog equipment on the car for the year of the engine - including all catalytic converters, etc. The other way - the BEST way - is to smog the car according to the bodystyle. The Cobra is a 1965 bodystyle, and, consequently, is smog exempt.

Tell the referee that you want the car smogged by *BODYSTYLE*.

What will happen is the car will be taken around to the work bay and put up on a dyno. The referee will take smog levels and record them. Then they will reset the numbers to EXEMPT in the computer. The sole reason you go to the BAR is so that they can record levels. It doesn't cost you a dime.

After taking the levels, the BAR will issue a sticker that they will affix to the car. It's about the size of a standard 3x5" index card. Find a place to mount this beforehand (it has a barcode on it, so it has to be visible) that is away from any engine solvents in the engine compartment. After they stick the thing on, you may want to add a bit of protection to the card. I have found that the UPS guys use a transparent tape that still allows the barcode to be scanned. You may want to check it out. If the sticker becomes unreadable sometime in the future, you will have to have the car re-inspected.

If you chose bodystyle (like I've said!), then skip on ahead to Step 4. If you didn't here are a few other tidbits about engines in CA (just in case you get a wild hair and decide you want to register the car by the engine year). This is why you don't want to go with year of the engine. Just about none of it applies to registering the car by bodystyle (you do have to have a closed crankcase (PCV, Sealed filler Cap, Air cleaner to C/Case hose) on a 1965 car):

Even though under SB100 you will not be subject to the biannual smog inspection, your car does have to have all of the equipment that came on it for the year of the bodystyle (1965) when you first go to register the car. Additionally, the engine that you can use in a SPCN car has to have been originally installed in a passenger car or light truck that was approved (by the BAR...go figure!) for sale and use in California (in 1965 they all were!). The engine MUST have all of the smog control devices that were used on the California Vehicle the engine came out of, and these devices must be intact and operational. Period. If you do not have all of these items, you will fail, and your car will not be assigned a BAR number. Here are some guidelines for equipment that came on California-model vehicles, as well as their applications:

- **1955 and Newer:** Closed crankcase (PCV, Sealed filler Cap, Air cleaner to C/Case hose).
- **1966 and Newer:** Exhaust Emission Controls (Air Cleaner, Carburetor, Distributor, Air Pump, EGR, Vacuum valves, ECU, Sensors, etc.). Pretty much everything related to the operation of that big air pump we call an 'engine' is considered an emission control device. Your car, when it gets it's BAR number has to have all of the STOCK devices intact and operating. You cannot change carburetors, air cleaners, distributor, etc. STOCK. I can't stress this enough.
- **1970 and Newer:** Evaporative Emission Controls (Gas tank, Gas Cap, vapor separator, valves, charcoal canister, etc.). The inspection will include everything right down to the gas cap...make sure it's there, if it came on the original California car.

The year of the engine is established by the year the block was made. The Referee has all kinds of information at his disposal that will allow him to establish the year the block was made. The year of the engine block is what the BAR uses to establish the equipment requirements your car will have to meet.

Further, just because the block came out of a California-registered car that doesn't necessarily mean that the block is legal, either. The block had to have been approved for sale in California. Cars that came in from out of state and were registered here may not have engines in them that were approved for sale in California. These

engines are not for use in SPCN cars that are to be registered for the first time in California without being retrofitted with the necessary pollution control devices that were used on that engine in California the year the block was manufactured. So a good safety tip, when looking for your donor car, is to make sure the emission sticker under the hood says the car was approved for sale in California.

Additionally, no mixing and matching of parts is allowed, although sometimes parts from newer models are California approved for replacement of older systems (you will have to have factory documentation or California Air Resources Board Approval notices before these systems are approved for use in your vehicle). All of the emission control pieces have to be for the specific engine that you are using. However, if your vehicle is using a 1970 or newer engine, the gas tank can be from any California vehicle that had an approved evaporative emission control system.

I recommend getting a 1965 or older block. That will certainly speed things along.

Having read all that, here's what will actually happen:

The Referee will do a very thorough Smog Check and inspection of your car. If you pass it, your car will be issued a sticker (which the BAR will affix to your car...make sure they put it on a part of the car that doesn't come off alot. They like to put it in doorjambs. See if you can get it put on the chassis. If you lose this sticker, you have to go through this entire process again!!!), with a bar code that will allow any Smog Check station to do the Biannual smog check - as may be required - for your car.

If you fail the test, do not leave just yet! The Referee will tell you exactly why you failed, and can even give you a list of what you need to do to get the car to pass the inspection. The BAR Referee is the person who makes the decision about your car, so he is the best source of information on what it will take to get your car to pass. Additionally, make sure that when you have to get a re-test that you go to this same BAR Inspection site and have all of the things the Referee listed corrected. The BAR Inspection site must give you one free re-test . Use it wisely.

THAT'S why you want to register by *BODYSTYLE!*

Have I made that clear enough yet?

Step 4: Brake and Light Inspection

This step isn't necessarily always a given; if the DMV forgets to mark it on your list of things to do, then you do not have to voluntarily get a B&L. If you do, your car has to have working turn signals (front and rear), headlights, taillights, gauge lights, and - this is important - a backup light. Cobras generally have not provision for a backup light, so you'll have to add one. Even if it's only temporary for the inspection. These can be purchased from Pep Boys.

Step 5: Return To The DMV.

The easiest step of all. You go here, turn in all of the paperwork, you've aquired, get your license plates, and leave. That's it. You're done. Congratulations!

What I would recommend for your records would be to make copies of every single scrap of paper you have. The DMV will take all of the receipts, all of the MSO stuff, and it will be (in theory) moved up to Sacramento). **JUST TO BE SAFE** - you should have a set, too!