

Straight talk about the legalities of the window tinting business... (Don't read this if you tend to be an ostrich – with your head in the sand!)

There are two areas inside of our industry which seem to be so “difficult” that a majority (and I am confident I can back this up) of the owners of window tinting businesses are providing illegal window film services: 1) Illegally dark cars and, 2) going into homes or businesses without the Oregon Contractor Construction Board's license. Both of these issues speak volumes about the character and integrity of a business owner, and place the consumer in a bad position – and being ignorant of the law is no excuse. Both scenarios are discussed – frankly – below.

Cars: Some of this is technical, but the citation from the police isn't, so bear with me. In Oregon the darkness of the tint applied to all side and rear windows on passenger cars and the front door windows on MPV's (trucks, vans, suburbans, etc) are restricted by law. Oregon's law is referred to as a “net 35%” law. And you, as the consumer, are required to have proof that your vehicle conforms to that standard. The problem is that most consumers do not know or understand the technical aspects of the law, and most tinters are happy to make a buck and conveniently ignore such minor details, putting you at legal risk.

The net-35 law considers the darkness of the glass which the vehicle was manufactured with and the tint material being applied. Both are controlled by law. First, the glass. The glass itself is controlled by the feds. Any passenger car manufactured for sale in the United States cannot have side or rear glass darker than 70% Visible Light Transmittance (VLT). When you look at a car and your perception is that the car's glass is clear – that's 70% VLT. Car makers can make the glass lighter than 70%, ie: 77%, 85%, etc, but they cannot make the glass any darker than 70% or they are in violation of federal law – which they obviously don't want. The tint. Oregon law assumes the car has 70% VLT glass, but it doesn't really matter, there is no wiggle room if your car happens to have lighter glass, because the applied tint material must still conform to the written statute – 50 % VLT. By combining the 70% VLT of the glass and the 50% VLT of the applied film you get a measurement of 35% net. Mathematically it looks like this: $.70$ (car glass) \times $.35$ (tint material applied) = $.35$ (net).

Installers are required to provide the consumer with certification that the product they installed conforms to both of the above standards. The consumer is to carry this certification with them should it ever be questioned by the law. However, without the proper digital meter, and lacking an extremely experienced eye for tint darkness, it is very difficult to determine the compliance of a tint installation. Tinters know this.



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They also are responding to consumer demand for a darker appearance than Oregon's law allows. It is easy to fudge a few numbers and make an illegal tint appear legal....especially for a few bucks more. One local auto tint installer actually asks his customers to sign off on a "waiver" form that supposedly absolves the installer from legal liability for an illegal tint job!?????

So, how do you know if your tint is legal? Have it measured digitally. If the meter is reading 35% VLT or higher on any side or rear window of your passenger car, you should have a certificate of compliance which states such. If any window fails the test, your vehicle is not in compliance and you are subject to a \$270 moving violation. Beyond that test, it is impossible to determine if the film on your car is actually 50% VLT by itself, without peeling it.

A note: SUV's front door glass (only) is subject to the same criterion as all the windows of passenger cars. You must have certification for the front doors.

If you don't know about your car - you bought it that way, etc., come on by and I will measure it for you - no charge ☺!

Homes and Businesses: If you ask some one to provide you with an estimate, or any service, on the structure of your home or business, that person MUST HAVE an Oregon Construction Contractor license.

If he/she does not: Anything that goes wrong with the work they perform for you will not be covered - as they have no bond. You have no legal recourse other than to attempt to sue them in court. They have committed a crime by working for you and you are likely in a bad spot to recover any damages for poor work, no work, or property damage. Additionally, they reveal a part of their character - if a person is working illegally, what other areas of their personal life might be suspect? And by working at, presumably, a lower hourly/bid rate, by hiring them they are depriving another person, who has spent the time and energy to secure the proper license, insurance and bond, from providing you a service, and, in turn making a fair profit for their labor.

Always ask the contractor for his CCB number. If they cannot provide it - protect yourself and do not hire them for work. There are several tinters in our area who routinely do in-home/business work illegally. Look at their websites/yellow page ads - they must post their CCB number there.

Now I feel better. I hope that this information makes you a wiser consumer.

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