Repair Assistance Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. What is Repair Assistance?

The Repair Assistance option is administered by the Bureau of Automotive Repair (BAR) Consumer Assistance Program (CAP) and is designed to help improve California’s air quality by reducing vehicle emissions. The Repair Assistance option provides qualified consumers who own a vehicle that fails its biennial (every other year) Smog Check inspection up to $500 in financial assistance towards certain emissions-related repairs.

2. What are the requirements to repair my vehicle through Repair Assistance?

Eligibility requirements are available on BAR’s website at www.bar.ca.gov. Requirements must be met at the time the application is submitted.

3. How do I participate in Repair Assistance?

If your vehicle fails its biennial Smog Check inspection, you must submit an application to CAP online or by mail. To apply online, visit BAR’s website at www.bar.ca.gov. To request an application be mailed to you, contact the Department of Consumer Affairs Consumer Information Center at (800) 952-5210. Note: Applying online may result in faster processing.

4. Are there documents I should submit with my application?

Yes. Applicants may be required to provide documentation verifying their income eligibility. To reduce processing time, you are encouraged to submit acceptable income documentation with your mailed application. When applying online, you are advised to mail income documentation with a copy of your confirmation notice. Visit BAR’s website at www.bar.ca.gov for income eligibility requirements and a list of acceptable income documents.

5. How long does it take to process my application?

In general, applications for the Repair Assistance option are processed within two (2) weeks of receipt of a completed application. Until your application has been processed, CAP is unable to determine your eligibility.

6. How will I be notified of the status of my application?

After your application is reviewed or processed, you will be mailed a letter. If you have your CAP ID number and vehicle license plate number, you may check your application status on BAR’s website at www.bar.ca.gov.

7. If approved, what can I expect?

If approved, you will be mailed a Letter of Eligibility which will provide specific instructions on how to repair your vehicle through CAP.
8. If approved, where do I take my vehicle for repairs?

You must take your vehicle to a STAR test-and-repair station authorized to repair vehicles participating in CAP. Visit BAR’s website at www.bar.ca.gov, for a list of STAR test-and-repair stations authorized to perform CAP repairs or call (800) 952-5210.

9. Is there a deadline for repairing my vehicle through CAP?

Yes. Repairs on your vehicle must start before the expiration date indicated on your Letter of Eligibility. If you are unable to use the Letter of Eligibility by the expiration date, but are still interested in participating, you will need to re-apply and meet all eligibility requirements at that time.

10. If I take my vehicle to a non-Star test-and-repair station, will CAP provide financial assistance toward the cost of repairs?

No. CAP is only authorized to reimburse STAR test-and-repair stations that have entered into an agreement with BAR to perform state subsidized emissions-related repair work.

11. What costs am I initially responsible for paying?

Participation in Repair Assistance requires that consumers pay a co-payment consisting of the total costs associated with the testing and diagnosis of the emissions-related failures for their vehicle. The co-payment is made directly to the STAR test-and-repair station that is authorized to perform CAP repairs.

12. What other charges will I be responsible for paying?

Consumers must pay for the Certificate of Compliance ($8.25) and any repairs authorized by the consumer which exceed the $500 CAP benefit.

13. What do stations charge for diagnosis, testing, and repairs?

Automotive repair businesses are allowed to set their own prices. CAP has no authority over the prices charged by automotive repair facilities. CAP does, however, require that STAR test-and-repair stations charge CAP consumers no more for repairs than would be charged to a non-CAP consumer. To ensure the best price and value for required repairs, we encourage consumers to obtain more than one estimate prior to authorizing diagnosis, testing, or repairs for their vehicles.

14. Will I be reimbursed for repairs obtained prior to or after applying to CAP?

No. CAP cannot reimburse consumers for costs incurred.

15. Why does a station have to perform an additional test and diagnosis to my vehicle prior to making repairs?

STAR test-and-repair stations are responsible for verifying and documenting the current condition of a vehicle; therefore, a Smog Check inspection must be performed by the repair station to determine the vehicle’s current condition as it relates to the Smog Check failure prior to recommending or performing repairs.
16. Can a STAR test-and-repair station decline to work on my vehicle?

Yes. STAR test-and-repair stations have the discretion of not accepting vehicles for any of the following reasons:

- The vehicle is inaccessible, unsafe, or untestable.
- The station does not have the expertise to diagnose and repair your specific vehicle.
- The consumer is uncooperative or unwilling to work within CAP guidelines.

17. What if the station is uncooperative or unwilling to work within CAP guidelines?

You may visit BAR’s website at www.bar.ca.gov to file a complaint online or call CAP at (866) 272-9642. CAP agents are available to answer calls Monday through Friday from 8:10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., with the exception of state holidays.

18. What types of repairs are covered?

CAP can only pay for emissions-related repairs.

19. What types of repairs are not covered by CAP?

CAP cannot pay for non-emissions related repairs or regularly scheduled maintenance items unless it is the direct cause of the emissions failure. Non-reimbursable items include, but are not limited to:

- Additives
- Air filters
- Batteries
- Body repairs
- Brakes
- Charging and starting system
- Completing OBD II drive cycles (The station may allow the consumer to complete.)
- Cooling system flushes
- Coolant hoses
- Fuel
- Fuel filters
- Glass repairs
- Heating ventilation and air conditioning repairs
- Injection flushes (except as recommended by the manufacturer for emissions-related repairs)
- Locking gas caps (unless it is the only available option)
- Maintenance items (except those that are the direct cause of the Smog Check failure)
- Motor and transmission mounts
- Mufflers
- Oil change and oil filters
- Oil and fluid top-offs
- Oil leaks
- Oil treatments
- Radiators
- Repairs performed after the vehicle is certified
- Repairs performed without the consumer's authorization
- Safety-related equipment (e.g., air bags, seat belts)
- Suspension
- Tailpipes
- Tires
- Top engine cleaning (except as recommended by the manufacturer for emissions-related repairs)
- Transmission flushes
- Water pumps
- 2004 and older Nissan product knock sensor
20. What are my options if the repairs exceed what CAP can pay?

- You may continue with the repair process and pay for additional repair costs yourself.
- You may be eligible for a one-time Repair Cost Waiver through the referee. You may speak with your STAR test-and-repair station about the waiver option or contact the Smog Check Referee Program at (800) 622-7733.

21. Where can I get more information?

You may contact CAP at (866) 272-9642. CAP agents are available to answer calls Monday through Friday from 8:10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., with the exception of state holidays.