

The Adaptive Driving Alliance created and paid for the following information that is being used on the NMEDA website titled "Purchasing Adaptive Vehicles On-Line." We would like to host this information on our site as well.

The following web pages and information are brought to you by The Mobility Resource. The Mobility Resource is (our description.)

The information outlined in this site is designed to inform you, the consumer, of the differences between purchasing new modified vehicles on-line as compared to in-person. The Mobility Resource supports face-to-face sales performed by local or regional establishments; the method The Mobility Resource believes provides the best product fit, service, and safety for the consumer.

We want to assist in educating you about the importance of industry standards, safety, service, training and value when purchasing a new modified vehicle. Whether you decide to purchase your next vehicle from an internet seller or in-person, the following information will help you make an educated purchase that is appropriate for you.

Click on the following listings in the index for answers to the common questions concerning purchasing a modified vehicle. Any terms underlined may be clicked for further information.

1. The Sales Process

2. Appropriateness of the Product

3. Compliance with Industry Standards and Regulations

4. Safety

5. After Sale – Service and Warranty

6. Value

7. Industry Links

The Sale Process

1. Can I buy a mobility vehicle on-line?

Yes, of course. The question, however, is how to buy a vehicle appropriate for your needs, compliant with industry regulations and standards, and one with which you will be satisfied in regards to future service and warranty.

2. What do state laws say about the on-line purchasing process?

Some states have specific laws concerning selling a vehicle across state lines. These laws are to protect the consumer. Check with legal counsel regarding the laws in your state.

3. Will I ever personally meet a sales representative from an internet seller?

not. Internet sales companies usually do not have regional sales representatives. You will be assigned an "in house" sales /ho will assist you, but with the lack of personal interaction, they may not be able to fully assess your needs, and the opportunity onal relationship will be diminished.

4. How would I obtain a license tag for a van I purchase on-line?

You will be able to go to your local tag office and purchase a permanent license tag. There may be a period of time when you cannot use your vehicle as temporary tags are usually not valid except within the state they are issued. Check with your local department of motor vehicles to verify.

5. How would I obtain a title for a van that I purchase out of state?

An out of state Seller who is located in a state other than the state you reside in probably can't obtain a title for you in your name. The seller may simply provide the title to you at the time of delivery. You would then be required to take the title to your local tag office and transfer it (for a fee) to your name. You should be very cautious about the titling process. Titles are complex and errors can occur. Correcting a title error is a time consuming and often complex task. Of significant importance is knowing the origin of your vehicle and title. Over 500,000 vehicles were branded "flood", scrap, or salvage" vehicles in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Some states allow the conversion of a "flood, salvage, or scrap title" after an inspection and then will issue a "non-branded title" which will leave no indication of its previous status.

6. If my van's mechanical systems fail while I own it, who is responsible?

That is a question of warranty and depends on the OEM warranty and the warranty provided by the vehicle modifier. A more significant issue is failure of a vehicle system resulting in bodily injury or property damage. In this case, the vehicle modifier should have what is called "product liability insurance". This insurance covers any damages to property or injury that might occur as the result of defects which are the responsibility of the modifier. Without this coverage, the vehicle owner has no recourse – someone to turn to for responsibility. Make sure to request a certificate of product liability insurance. Vehicle sellers also have what is called "garage insurance" to cover the work they perform. The Mobility resource members carry coverage of \$1,000,000 per occurrence.

7. If my van is involved in an accident or stolen after I have purchased it and before I receive it (while it is still in the care of the on-line mobility dealer), who is responsible for the damage or loss?

The answer depends on who has what insurance. So make sure that your insurance starts upon your purchase even if you have not yet received the vehicle. It is a good idea to request a proof of insurance from the internet seller. Most vehicle dealers have what is called Garage Liability Insurance. If they are liable for the loss or damage, this insurance should cover the cost. Sometimes there is a question as to whose insurance is primarily responsible the internet seller's, the trucking company's, or yours.

8. What if I have substantial problems with a van I purchase on-line?

Most states have "lemon law" statutes that address defective vehicles. However, YOUR state's lemon law may not apply if the van was not purchased in that state. Confer with legal counsel about this question. Aside from lawsuits, in many situations where there is a conflict, personal contact and established relationships help resolve the problem. In the case of on-line purchasing, you may never personally meet an individual from the internet seller. See section below on warranty.

9. How will I know that the vehicle I purchase on-line will be properly converted and fit the needs of my disability?

Very important question. You really will not know until the vehicle is delivered to you. Every van is different and mistakes can occur. Also, without the internet seller meeting you personally and you having the ability to "test" the vehicle, there is no way to fully ensure that you will properly fit in the vehicle and be able to use it as you desire. Make sure in advance that you have the right to refuse delivery of the vehicle and receive a full refund if, upon delivery, you do not like the way the van fits your needs; it fails to meet your reasonable expectations; or, it does not match the description provided by the internet seller. See next section on this web site about "Appropriateness of Product".

10. Can my internet seller provide me with references?

Yes. but the references may not be local to you. making them more difficult to verifv.

Whereas, with a local seller, in your community, you can personally meet individuals who have purchased and used the services of your local retailer.

Appropriateness of the Product

1. How will I know that the lift/ramp system on the van that I purchase on-line will accommodate my needs and my wheelchair?

You will not know for sure until you actually use the vehicle. Many ramps/lifts have stated capacities for height, weight, and length of the occupant in the wheelchair, and you will have to provide your information to the internet seller. Any error or miscommunication of information could affect your ability to properly and safely ingress and egress the vehicle.
2. How will I know that the van that I purchase on-line has ample interior space to maneuver my wheelchair in the vehicle and proper head room?

Manufacturers of vehicles provide stated dimensions of their vehicles, but you will have to provide accurate information about your size and the size and type of your wheelchair to the internet seller. As for maneuverability, the manufacturer can give you interior dimensions that you could simulate at home, but buying sight unseen has certain inherent risks.
3. How do I know that the wheelchair restraint mechanism provided by the internet seller will work on my wheelchair and that I or my care giver will be able to operate it?

You will not know for sure until someone who is trained in the proper use of wheelchair securement systems is able to evaluate you, your wheelchair, and the restraint mechanism together in your vehicle in the interior location(s) at which you wish to be restrained.
4. How will I know that the seatbelt systems in the van that I purchase on-line will accommodate my needs?

You will not know until a person qualified to evaluate you and your wheelchair (if you are remaining in it during transit) does so while you are in your vehicle
5. If I transfer out of my wheelchair to an OEM seat with the assistance of a transfer seat base for transit in the vehicle, how will I know that the seat base provided by the internet seller will work for me and be mounted in the proper location?

Many transfer seat bases have significant ranges of motion and have standard mounting locations. If you are not able to test the system in the vehicle prior to final installation, you will not know for sure if it will work properly for you.
6. If I purchase from an internet seller, will I have the opportunity to know about and understand the latest technological advances in modified transportation for the disabled?

It is possible, but unlikely. There have been so many advances in technology in the past few years that it would be difficult for the internet seller to articulate and demonstrate all available products to you. The local retailer, on the other hand, would generally have product on hand that they can demonstrate to you in person and allow you to determine which technology best suites your needs
7. Will an internet seller install driving controls for me?

Yes, but there is a high risk of substantial injury if you, the user, are not properly evaluated, fitted, and trained on the driving control in question. PURCHASING DRIVING CONTROLS ON-LINE CAN BE DANGEROUS. To be evaluated, fitted, and trained by a CDRS, you can contact ADED at www.ADED.org for information

Compliance with Industry Standards and Regulations

1. How will I know that the vehicle I purchase online will be compliant with industry standards?

You will have to ask the retailer. Recognized industry standards are administered by the [National Mobility Equipment Dealers Association](#). You can ask your retailer or contact NMEDA at 1-800-833-0427..
2. Will my vehicle that I purchase online be compliant with Federal Regulations?

Again, you will have to ask the retailer. Key federal regulations for the adaptive equipment industry are contained in the Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (FMVSS). These regulations govern issues such as fuel system integrity, occupant protection and restraint systems (seat belts). Another important set of federal regulations to ask the dealer about is compliance with EPA emissions requirements, including regulations applicable to the fuel tank. Ask the seller about documentation verifying compliance.
3. Does conformance with federal regulations really make a difference?

Yes. Key federal regulations that regulate the adaptive equipment industry fit into three important categories: Crash Avoidance, Occupant Protection, and Post-crash Protection. The crash avoidance regulations relate to issues such as overloading a vehicle and weight distribution which can affect the vehicle's ability to maneuver and stop properly. Occupant protection regulations address issues such as the integrity of seats, seatbelts, door retention components and air bags. Post crash protection involves such issues as fuel system safety and flammability. There are also federal standards on wheelchair lifts and wheelchair lift installation. Non-conformance with these regulations can increase the likelihood that your vehicle may become involved in an accident and that the passengers will sustain substantial injuries.
4. Is there enforcement of federal regulations that prevents me from purchasing a non-compliant vehicle?

Yes, but budget limitations hamper federal agencies from doing as much enforcement as they would like. Conformance to the FMVSS is on a "self-certification" basis and there is limited oversight by the Federal Government. This is an important reason why you have to get to know the company from whom you are buying. Federal enforcement often only occurs once a substantial number of accidents occur and are reported to NHTSA.

Safely Using the Adapted Vehicle

- 1. How will I know that I am using my vehicle purchased on-line in a proper and safe manner?**

You will never know for sure unless an individual trained in the proper operation can observe you using the equipment, a service usually provided as part of a face-to-face purchase. Internet sellers may only provide a manual or video on the use of their product; whereas, a local retailer will personally train you and be able to observe the interaction between you, your wheelchair, and the vehicle systems to ensure that you know how to operate the vehicle and adaptive equipment in a safe manner. **PROPER TRAINING ON THE USE OF ADAPTIVE EQUIPMENT CAN GREATLY REDUCE THE RISK OF INJURY TO YOU, YOUR PASSENGERS/DRIVER AND THOSE AROUND YOU. NEVER COMPROMISE ON TRAINING!** Proper training on driving controls is done by a Certified Driver Rehabilitation Specialist, CDRS, with whom a local retailer should have contacts and can coordinate. For more information on CDRSs go to www.ADED.org
- 2. Can I take my vehicle that I purchased on-line to a local retailer for training?**

Usually not. Many local dealers do not wish to take on the training responsibility for products that they do not sell. They do not want to give improper or incomplete information on products that they do not represent and for which they may be held liable in the event of an accident.
- 3. Will the internet seller send a representative to me for training if I request it?**

Commonly not. Generally, internet sellers do not have regional representatives. Certainly ask, and if the answer is "yes" make sure to inquire about any extra costs.
- 4. Since I have used adaptive equipment for many years, shouldn't I be able to figure out how to use an on-line product safely myself?**

Very possibly no. Regardless of your experience, the adaptive equipment industry is evolving at a rapid rate with new safety features and technology being introduced frequently.
- 5. Are training and usage issues the only safety concerns?**

No. As mentioned in the previous section, many safety issues are related to federal standards that are designed to reduce the chances that your vehicle is involved in an accident, and if an accident does occur, reduce the chances of substantial personal injury. *Keep in mind that compliance with FMVSS is not only designed for your protection, but also for the protection of pedestrians, and other vehicles on the road*

After Sale – Service and Warranty

1. Would the vehicle I buy on-line have warranty service in my local area?

It may. You will want to talk directly with the internet seller AS WELL AS with the proposed local warranty service provider and **confirm in writing** that the specific vehicle you are purchasing can and will have local warranty service at a specific location. Also, it is recommended that you personally go and meet the local service company and evaluate their facility, their credentials, and their ability and willingness to be your service provider
2. If I am not pleased with the contracted local service provider that the internet seller has provided, can I take my vehicle elsewhere for warranty service of the adaptive equipment?

Possibly. But many local retailers will not work on products that are sold on-line for several reasons. Many internet sellers allow warranty service only by their designated facilities; and even if they are flexible, they may not pay competitive warranty labor rates, resulting in a limited number of places willing to take on warranty repairs. This is important because it could mean that you pay the bill. Secondly, internet sellers usually do not offer training for technicians in your local market, also limiting the choice of service facilities. Lastly, since the local retailer may not be familiar with the on-line product, they may decline to work on the vehicle due to safety concerns and the risk of being liable in the event of an accident or injury.
3. What about the warranty on the Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) chassis if I buy the vehicle on-line?

If the adaptive vehicle manufacturer performs vehicle modifications that are not approved by the OEM, certain parts of your OEM warranty might become void as a result of the modifications. Vehicles sold by The Mobility Resource dealers generally do not have this problem. Also, consider that local OEM dealers usually have relationships with local adaptive equipment retailers. This relationship and familiarity is valuable when an OEM warranty issue arises. A local adaptive equipment dealer can often be of assistance in resolving warranty issues with the local OEM service center.

Value

1. I am interested in saving money and on-line vehicles appear to save me money. Are they a good value?

Value is more than just the purchase price. You need to also consider:

1. The ability to ensure that the product is appropriate for you by personally seeing and entering an accurate demo of your potential purchase prior to actually purchasing it.
2. Professional and thorough in-person training on the proper use of your equipment.
3. The ability to have your product serviced in your local market by trained individuals who are familiar with you and your vehicle.
4. Your ability to resolve conflicts with individuals with whom you have developed a personal relationship.
5. The ability to resell your vehicle or trade-in your modified vehicle in the future.