

# PROBLEM VEHICLE WORKSHEET

**Objective:**

To identify problem vehicles in a neighborhood

**Intended Use:**

This tool is used to identify abandoned and problem vehicles that contribute to neighborhood blight. It requires partnerships between those completing the form and the local agency that has the authority to remove vehicles that are out of compliance with local or state codes.

**Audience:**

- This tool is valuable to organizations involved in neighborhood revitalization interventions, as well as residents working to improve their neighborhood.

**Outcome:**

- The number of abandoned automobiles in a neighborhood is reduced.

**Context:**

Challenged neighborhoods frequently suffer from an accumulation of old and abandoned vehicles in front yards, parking areas, streets or driveways. Such vehicles are examples of the "Broken Window Theory," which holds that both real and symbolic broken windows serve as magnets for crime. Residents often complain that local authorities do not respond to requests to remove these cars.

Addressing problem vehicles can serve as a visible first step in a neighborhood's efforts to revitalize and reclaim the community.

Revitalizing or improving living conditions in challenged neighborhoods is a complex process requiring multiple interventions that occur simultaneously and addressing problem vehicles will not, by itself, solve the deeply rooted causes of neighborhood deterioration. The problems associated with old and abandoned vehicles are both real and symbolic. Vehicles which are leaking oil or serving as a place to store debris or even illicit drugs can be seen as an environmental or public health hazard. But they also project a sense of resident dissociation from community life and contribute to a blighted environment that reinforces the feeling that no one cares about the neighborhood.

Residents often ask for assistance in removing problem vehicles as a visible first step in reclaiming their neighborhood. Their removal is

a statement that residents or other concerned organizations are reinvesting in the neighborhood and serving notice that things are changing for the better.

**The Process**

It is common for residents to be introduced to the idea of problem vehicle removal during a Neighborhood Watch training or other neighborhood association meeting. When introduced this way, completed Problem Vehicle Worksheets are usually turned into the Neighborhood Watch Captain, who forwards them to the police department or code enforcement for action. However, individual residents or resident groups can also send the worksheets directly to the local authority responsible for the problem. In this case, it is especially important that the authority agrees

beforehand to remove reported vehicles within certain time frames. If police or code enforcement fail to respond, it reinforces the belief that those with power “don’t care.”

The tool itself is self-explanatory. On the worksheet, one notes where the vehicle is located and specific details about it. This information is essential for police or code enforcement to determine what action is to be taken. For example, localities differ in how they treat abandoned vehicles on public versus private property.

If community members are engaged in this work, it is essential that they understand local laws pertaining to problem vehicles so they know what is possible and if appropriate action is being taken.



**POINTERS:**

- **Be sure residents understand local laws about removal of problem vehicles from public and private property**
- **Hold local authorities accountable for acting on Problem Vehicle Worksheets in a timely manner**
- **Consider addressing problem vehicles as a way to make a powerful early statement about neighborhood improvement**



