

How To Start A Mobile Truck Repair Business



How much does it cost to tow a big rig?

No, no, don't open up a bunch of search tabs. We'll tell you.

The price to tow a damaged, misbehaving, or otherwise wounded big rig (or other heavy-duty machine) will depend on what shape it's in and how far you need to take it. If it's been heavily damaged or in an accident, you could be looking at \$10,000-\$50,000.



Holy guacamole, that's a lot of dough.

No fleet operator wants to get that kind of invoice. That's why preventive maintenance is so critical—it stops a lot of problems before they can start. But breakdowns and other roadside misfortunes happen; sometimes a truck needs a mechanic, plain and simple.

Ah, Fullbay, we hear you say, if only mechanics could go to injured trucks instead of just summoning a tow.

Well, we've got good news for you: Mobile truck repair services are on the rise. If you're interested in a potentially lucrative diesel career that gets you out of the shop and out on the road, being a mobile tech might be for you.

But Fullbay, where do I start?

We're so glad you asked. Kick off your boots, grab a drink, and sit down. Let's talk about starting your own mobile business.

What licenses do I need for a mobile truck repair business?

Let's get the boring necessities out of the way first.

We're writing this for techs who want to strike out on their own and may not have all their paperwork in order. If you're a shop owner already, you've likely got a lot of this squared away. (If you don't...please get on that.)

Running your own mobile truck repair business means obtaining the correct licensing. This does vary by city and state, so we'll provide steps anyone should take—**but it's on you to make sure you're complying with your region's laws.**

- Obtain a business license or equivalent from your city (for example, San Diego requires a “business tax certificate” that serves the same purpose).
- Obtain an EIN number from the IRS (it's free, and it takes about two minutes online).
- Obtain a reseller's permit from your state. This lets you buy parts (often in bulk, for wholesale prices) and sell them to your clients. Those lug nuts don't appear out of thin air.
- Obtain whatever additional licenses you'll need. Again, this varies by state; you'll need to find out exactly what you need.
- Get insurance. This is a huge topic unto itself and what you end up paying will depend on the size of your business, the type of truck you get, and so on. But trust us, you want and need it.

You'll also want to determine your range—how far you're willing to go to customers. Will you have a radius of 50 miles, or 100? Something in between? The distance you have to travel to and between customers will impact your fuel consumption, insurance, and general wear and tear on your repair truck, so figure out early on the area you plan on sticking to.

Where should I set up my mobile truck repair business?

You might figure you're going to operate out of your current location. That might be fine...or it might not. Making a profit at any business ultimately comes down to three things:

- You do good work
- You operate honorably
- Your local market isn't completely oversaturated

The first two factors are completely within your control. Do good work and treat your customers well and you'll be off to a good start. But if you're setting up as a mobile mechanic in an area that already has ten thousand of them, well, you're in for a tough climb to the top.

Now, we write about the diesel technician shortage all the time. We even had a webinar about it! So you probably aren't diving into an oversaturated market as it is.

But think carefully about your potential service area. The country has thousands of miles of long, empty highways that trucks traverse all the time; small towns and cities along those stretches are a prime starting spot for a mobile mechanic setting up shop.

Consider, too, what kind of weather you may face. A blizzard will make it difficult, if not impossible, to get out to a stranded truck. Some mountain passes become inaccessible in bad weather.

The climate of your potential territory will also influence what parts you need. The Grapevine in Southern California sees a lot of overheating in the summer, so you'll benefit from stocking up on coolant and hoses. Meanwhile, winter in that area sees frozen fuel lines and thickening oil.

Wherever you decide to set up, keep in mind the local weather and what you might encounter on any given repair job.

How much does it cost to start a mobile truck repair business?

That's another one we'll have to answer with "It varies." What you pay for training, licenses, and insurance will vary by your location. But here's a list of the other general expenditures you'll face:

- Truck
- Immediate parts inventory
- Fuel
- Parking for your truck, if necessary
- Tools
- Billing setup or payment processing
- Answering/forwarding service for calls

We can't provide legal advice, but if you're thinking about incorporating your business (forming an LLC or S-Corp), you should probably check in with a lawyer and get their assistance. Forming an LLC can be quite pricey in some states (\$800 in California!) and cheap in others; they also provide specific changes to how your taxes will be handled.

Oh, yeah, taxes. You'll be your own business, which for most means paying quarterly taxes, figuring out deductions, and all that. You know who can do that for you? An accountant.

In short, you may be looking at upwards of six digits, especially if you set yourself up with a newer/larger truck and a healthy parts selection. Happily, the national average salary for a mobile mechanic is \$55.6k, according to ZipRecruiter, and as you establish yourself your wages will go up.

How should I set up my truck?

You probably aren't going to cruise to the rescue of big rigs in a sedan or a sporty coupe (although if you do, please send us pictures). There are two things

to consider when outfitting your repair truck: Who you hope to service, and how much inventory you hope to carry.

What kind of truck should you get? We've seen everything from extended cab pickups to converted box trucks to big vans. Try to find one that gets decent mileage and has a comfortable bench or seat—you'll be in there a lot. Do you combat boredom with music? Get a truck with a decent stereo system.

Once you have your vehicle picked out, get your tools together. We've gone into detail about the types of tools you'll find at a repair shop; obviously, not everything will fit into your truck, but focus on the things you'll need immediately:

- Socket sets
- Brake/suspension tools
- Scan tool
- Impact gun

Other equipment you might want to bring along includes an air reel, air compressor, and pumps. You'll also need to carry a selection of parts to make quick and common repairs on the spot. Things like air lines, hoses, oil and lubricant, coolant, and trailer hinges are always good things to keep on hand, though you can make decisions about what else to carry based on what kind of calls you get.

We do recommend putting a lot of thought into the parts you'll keep close to hand. Our case study of AAA Semi-Truck & Trailer revealed that a mobile mechanic can end up wasting a day if they don't have the correct part with them and end up going back and forth. Don't let that happen to you!

How do I get the word out?

Okay. You've gotten your licensing together, you have a truck, and you're ready to start working your mechanical magic.

Or you would be, if people knew you existed.

Don't fling up your hands in despair. There's a way to get the word out. It's called marketing.

We aren't going to go into the ins and outs of marketing yourself just now. We wrote a massive ebook called The M-Word to help you out, and we've even got a post about it. But since you're going mobile, we've isolated a few particularly helpful tips for you.

- **Mind your socials.** This is *incredibly* critical as a mobile tech. We're not going to go into all the ways they can help you establish an online community for your customers (really, read the ebook for that) but they're almost as important as your website.
- **Get yourself a website.** List your hours, your location, what kind of repairs and towing services you're equipped to offer, and any testimonials you may have. You'll also want a "contact me" button that lets potential customers call or email immediately.
- **Get listed in truck repair directories.** This can take a little time, but directories make it easy for a stranded driver (or dispatcher) to find a nearby technician.
 - NTTS: Not only can you get listed with them, you can even purchase advertising.
 - 4RoadService: Offers upgrade options that link to your social profiles.
 - Truckers Assist: You can register with them online or give them a call.
 - FleetNet America: We actually have an integration with FleetNet; see more about it below.
- **Get yourself some freebies.** Put your name and contact info on things that are small and easy to carry. Think pens and magnets—we especially like magnets, because once that thing is on someone's fridge, they are going to see your name every single day whether they're noticing it or not. That kind of subconscious association has led to a lot of phone calls. You'll also want to invest in business

cards—yes, people still use these. You can ask to leave them at restaurants and hotels near truck stops, as these places are often the first spots truckers venture to when their vehicles are in distress.

How do I set up a back office? Do I need a back office?

We get it. You probably became a tech because you didn't actually want to deal with an office. Surprise! Everyone has to deal with the administrative side of things on occasion.

If you are springing off from an existing shop, the answer is easy: use *their* back office.

But if you're just striking out on your own, you need to find a place.

In theory, you can turn your repair truck into an office. Keep a laptop in the passenger seat and set up a Wi-Fi hotspot with your phone...but let's not do that. Find a place to post up and get your work done. Maybe that's your spare bedroom. Maybe it's a small corner of your apartment. What matters is that you have room for a laptop, a tablet, and any documentation/paperwork you've got.

We'll go ahead and mention that Fullbay makes it easy to manage a shop—and doubly easy to manage your mobile shop. Everything's in the cloud, so you can access it anywhere. It handles all the paperwork, makes invoicing a snap, and even manages your parts inventory for you. All critical things for the lone wolf tech cruising the highways.

There's another sweetener, too: Remember we mentioned FleetNet a couple sections up? FleetNet is one of the integrations offered on Fullbay Connect. We've got a blog post detailing everything it does, but basically, you can link your FleetNet account to Fullbay.

That way, when a trucker calls FleetNet for help, you'll get the notification (via text, phone call, or email) via Fullbay and decide whether you want to take it or not.

There's something exciting about the life of a mobile tech. You'll be heading out every day, helping those who most need it—often truckers stranded by the side of the road—and you'll be running your own business at the same time.

Your work prospects will only go up, by the way. People keep talking about self-driving trucks that have none of the weaknesses of human-driven trucks: they don't need sleep and thus can drive 24/7. But those trucks will break down, too, and often faster—all that wear and tear adds up.

MOBILE MAINTENANCE SHOP



The Schutt Industries LTT-MMS adds a powerful asset to your arsenal of mobile maintenance hardware.

REQUEST A QUOTE

PRODUCT DESCRIPTION

The Schutt Industries LTT-MMS adds a powerful asset to your arsenal of mobile maintenance hardware. The Schutt Industries LTT-MMS Mobile Maintenance Shop is a complete mobile tool set that has been engineered to provide most everything a mechanic will ever need to accomplish elaborate field repairs on vehicles of all types and sizes.

The LTT-MMS provides a complete solution for situations where you need to deploy an elaborate shop-set of tools with personnel to where the problem is, and where base camps need to be mobile at a moments notice.

From it's built-in 10KW generator, air compressor, optional tool storage combined with reeled hoses, work lights, and work surface there are few jobs the MMS can't handle.

As with all Schutt Industries products the LTT-MMS is exceptionally well crafted. These units have been deployed to Afghanistan where they cover the harshest terrain with ease. Built on our LTT-Heavy Chassis platform these units track the HMMMV perfectly.

The LTT-MMS can be configured to accommodate just about any tool-set you prefer. Contact us today with questions regarding your LTT-MMS needs.