



Vehicle Modifications and Nevada's New Law: Everything You Need to Know About SB 80 But Were Afraid to Ask

There's been a lot of talk (some confusion, along with some misrepresentation) about SB 80, Nevada's new vehicle modification law. Rumors are flying, especially with regard to the status of the 2025 SEMA Show, so let's clear the air.

This FAQ breaks down what the law actually says, what's still legal, and why you don't need to panic if you're modifying.

Is it now illegal to modify your vehicle in Nevada?

No. Simply modifying your vehicle, like adding a turbocharger, swapping your exhaust, or upgrading suspension, remains legal in Nevada. What is not legal is tampering with vehicles' emissions systems. Spoiler alert: such tampering has already been illegal under state and federal law for years; this new Nevada law just adds a mechanism for local enforcement of the law.

Sounds like another "the law is still the law"-type situation.

Exactly. Federal law [remains in place](#) with regard to the installation of defeat devices or tampering with motor vehicles or non-road equipment. Such tampering is in direct violation of section 203(a)(3) of the Clean Air Act and 40 C.F.R. §§ 1068.101(b). It's also been illegal under Nevada state law for years through existing equipment regulations, including tampering prohibitions found in NRS 484D.535. SB 80 simply increases the consequences at the state level.

What does "emissions tampering" mean?

Emissions tampering includes:

- Removing or disabling emissions control parts like catalytic converters or oxygen sensors
- Installing devices that trick or override emissions systems
- Tuning or modifying an engine in a way that increases emissions beyond what is allowed

So, what kinds of modifications are legal?

Plenty. You can still:

- Install aftermarket performance parts that do not interfere with emissions systems
- Use CARB-certified or EPA-compliant parts
- Modify your vehicle's appearance, suspension, brakes, interior, and more

If the parts you use are designed for street use and meet emissions standards, your build is legal.

Are engine swaps now illegal in Nevada?

No. Engine swaps are still legal in Nevada as long as they follow basic emissions rules. The law says you are not violating SB 80 if:

“The engine being installed includes emissions control equipment, and those components are present and functional.”

In plain terms:

- You can swap in a different internal combustion engine, as long as it has its emissions equipment and it works.
- You cannot remove or disable that equipment during or after the swap.
- Swaps that meet these requirements are still allowed.

Is it true that SB 80 lets officers require inspections for the first time?

No. The ability for peace officers and DMV enforcement personnel to require a vehicle inspection has been part of Nevada law for years. They have long been allowed to refer vehicles for inspection if they suspect a violation, including for issues related to emissions equipment. SB 80 does not create this authority. What it does is add new penalties for emissions tampering, which was already illegal under existing state and federal law.

Is the 2025 SEMA Show in danger because of this new Nevada law?

No. This law does not affect the SEMA Show. SEMA works closely with Nevada officials to ensure the show continues without interruption. SB 80 applies only to vehicles being driven on public roads in Nevada. It does not apply to vehicles that are trailered in and displayed at the SEMA Show.

If you’re hauling in a purpose-built racecar, this law doesn’t apply to you either, as long as the car is not being operated on public roads. If your vehicle is emissions compliant, you are good to go.

How does SEMA help ensure parts are legal?

SEMA operates two SEMA Garage Emissions Compliance Centers, one in California and one in Michigan. These facilities help test aftermarket parts for emissions compliance by:

- helping manufacturers get CARB Executive Orders or meet EPA standards through the SEMA Certified program, and
- providing technical support to keep products legal for the street.

SEMA has invested significant resources into our Garages to help keep the aftermarket industry moving forward while staying within the law.

What changed in Nevada under SB 80?

Because of SB 80, Nevada statute beginning Oct. 1, 2025:

- Makes emissions tampering a misdemeanor under state law

At no point now, or after Oct. 1, are legal modifications or compliant engine swaps banned in Nevada.

But what *exactly* does SB 80 say??

Oh, got it! SB 80 amends existing Nevada state law (NRS 480.610) to identify the following unlawful activities:

*(e) Except as otherwise provided in subsection 2, tamper with a device for the control of emissions of a motor vehicle or remove such a device from a motor vehicle, including, without limitation, exchanging the engine of a motor vehicle for a different engine; or
(f) Possess an electronic device capable of tampering with a device for the control of emissions of a motor vehicle.*

Additionally, SB 80 provides the following clarification on legality:

*2. A person does not violate paragraph (e) of subsection 1 by exchanging the engine of a motor vehicle for:
(a) An electric motor; or
(b) A different engine if any device for the control of emissions of a motor vehicle that is included with the engine being inserted into the motor vehicle is operational.*

So, just to be sure, engine swaps are still allowed?

They are. But be careful with all that speed. And see you at the 2025 SEMA Show!

Here's the Bottom Line

- Modifying your vehicle is still legal in Nevada, as long as you are not tampering with emissions systems.
- Nevada can now enforce against emissions tampering, which was already illegal under state and federal law.
- Engine swaps are still allowed if the emissions equipment that comes with the engine is installed and works.
- The SEMA Show is not at risk. Not now, not ever.
- SEMA invests heavily to help manufacturers stay compliant with federal and state laws through its emissions testing facilities at the two SEMA Garages, which is a valuable benefit of your SEMA membership.