EVIDENCE PRESERVATION CHECKLIST

Preserving a modified vehicle or light trailer

Modified vehicles lose their evidence faster than stock ones. Aftermarket wheels and lift kits get stripped and sold, tow yards auction salvage in weeks, owners “return to stock” a tuned engine computer before an inspection, and a trailer gets uncoupled and towed home. Once the as-found configuration is gone, the engineering question often can't be answered.

Suggested form, not legal advice. Counsel decides the recipients, legal basis and wording. Preservation is best practice for every party.

1. Ask the custodian not to

01	☐	Don't sell, auction, salvage, crush, part out, transfer or release the vehicle, trailer or parts.
02	☐	Don't repair, wash or pressure-wash them, or remove debris, fluids or loose parts.
03	☐	Don't remove, replace or return to stock any aftermarket component: lift or lowering kits, wheels, tires, wheel spacers, brakes, intake or exhaust parts, turbochargers, lighting, gauges, harnesses, hitches, ball mounts, couplers, safety chains or brake controllers.
04	☐	Don't start, crank, jump-start or charge the vehicle, or disconnect or reconnect its battery.
05	☐	Don't connect a scan tool, programmer or tuning device; don't clear codes; don't reset, re-flash or “return to stock” any engine, transmission or airbag control module.
06	☐	Don't uncouple the trailer, move the coupler latch, adjust or remove the ball mount, or disturb the safety chains, breakaway cable or wiring connector.
07	☐	Don't discard loose parts, broken fragments, fasteners, chains, or items found at the scene or in the vehicle.

2. Also preserve

08	☐	Intake photographs, tow tickets, storage logs, release forms and auction listings.
09	☐	Handheld tuners, tune files, programmers and any aftermarket controllers.
10	☐	Receipts, invoices and build records for parts and installation.
11	☐	Owner posts, forum build threads and social-media photos of the vehicle or trailer.
12	☐	Communications about the vehicle, trailer or parts since the incident.

3. Plan a joint inspection

13	☐	**Phase 1, non-destructive.** Photographs, scans and measurements, with read-only electronic data acquisition that is hashed so every party can verify it.
14	☐	**Phase 2, destructive,** only by written agreement of all parties or court order.
15	☐	Notice to interested parties, attendance logs and chain-of-custody records consistent with ASTM E860, E1188 and E1492.

4AM Engineering analyzes crashes, failures and fires involving modified vehicles, light trailers and towing equipment. To start a conflict check (names only), use the form at 4ameng.com or call (602) 935-6079.

SUGGESTED FORM — FOR COUNSEL TO ADAPT AND SEND ON LAW-FIRM LETTERHEAD

Evidence preservation request

Suggested form, not legal advice. Replace every bracketed field; counsel decides the recipients, legal basis and wording.

[DATE]

VIA EMAIL AND CERTIFIED MAIL

[TOW YARD / STORAGE FACILITY / INSURER / SALVAGE AUCTION / OWNER]
[ADDRESS]

Re: Preservation of evidence — [YEAR MAKE MODEL], VIN [VIN]; [TRAILER DESCRIPTION], VIN [VIN]; incident of [DATE] at [LOCATION]; your stock / claim no. [NO.]

This firm represents [PARTY] in connection with the incident above. The vehicle(s), trailer(s) and parts listed above are evidence in a pending or anticipated legal matter. **Please preserve them in their current condition** until you receive written release from this office.

Specifically, please do not:

- Sell, auction, salvage, crush, part out, transfer or release any of the items;
- Repair, wash, pressure-wash, or remove debris, fluids, or loose parts from them;
- Remove, replace or return to stock any aftermarket component (for example, lift or lowering kits, wheels, tires, wheel spacers, brakes, intake or exhaust parts, turbochargers, lighting, gauges, harnesses, hitches, ball mounts, couplers, safety chains, or brake controllers);
- Start, crank, jump-start, connect a battery charger to, or operate the vehicle, or disconnect or reconnect its battery;
- Connect any scan tool, programmer, tuning device or diagnostic equipment, or clear codes, or reset, re-flash or “return to stock” any engine, transmission or airbag control module;
- Uncouple the trailer, move the coupler latch, adjust or remove the ball mount, or disturb the safety chains, breakaway cable or wiring connector, if the trailer is still attached;
- Discard any loose parts, broken fragments, fasteners, chains, or items found at the scene or in the vehicle.

Please also preserve all records about these items, including intake photographs, tow tickets, storage logs, release forms, auction listings, and any communications about them.

Please confirm in writing, by [DATE], that the items are being preserved, where they are located, and whether they are stored indoors. If you cannot preserve the items, notify this office immediately so that other arrangements can be made. Reasonable storage charges should be directed to [PAYOR].

Our engineering consultant may contact you to schedule a non-destructive inspection. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

[ATTORNEY NAME]
[FIRM]