VyRal

A LeakReceipts Field Guide

LeakReceipts for Diesel & Mobile Mechanics

The Field Guide: where the money leaks, how to prove it, and how to close it

For: Diesel / Mobile Mechanics

by VyRal Dynasty

LeakReceipts for Diesel & Mobile Mechanics The Field Guide: where the money leaks, how to prove it, and how to close it

First edition, November 2026, revised 12 November 2026. Built from VyRal's lane research as it stood on 11 November 2026.

© 2026 VyRal Dynasty Holdings LLC, a South Carolina company. All rights reserved. A VyRal Dynasty product.

How every number in this book is labeled.

- **VERIFIED** means the figure comes from a named, dated source, and the source is printed next to it.
- **CALCULATED** means it is arithmetic on verified numbers or on your own numbers, and the math is shown.
- **ESTIMATE** means a reasoned range, and it is always called one.
- **STRUCTURAL** marks a standing rule of the trade (a law, a contract term, how the paperwork works), not a market figure.
- **STILL BEING MEASURED** means VyRal has not verified a figure yet, so no number is printed.

If a number is not labeled, it is a blank for you to fill from your own paper.

What this book is not. This is education, not legal, tax, accounting or financial advice. Where a fix says a professional decides, a professional decides. Nothing here says that any company, customer or person did anything wrong. The fixes show you how to check your own paper and ask in writing.

About how this book was made. This book was assembled with AI from VyRal's sourced research on this trade and checked against those sources. AI can make mistakes. Before you act on a figure, check it against the source printed beside it. Rules and rates change, and every figure carries its date for that reason.

Before you share any document with anyone, Vera included, black out account numbers, Social Security numbers and anything else you would not hand a stranger.

Contents

1. The short answer for your trade
2. What people in your trade say hurts
3. Get your paper together
4. Leak 1: Flat-Rate/Flag-Rate Pay — Unpaid Non-Flagged Time
5. Leak 2: Diesel Mechanic Pay Benchmark
6. Leak 3: Self-employment tax set-aside, for independent/mobile owners
7. Leak 4: Self-Employment Tax — truck and tooling are what shrink the base
8. Leak 5: Pride Economy — Tools & Rig
9. Leak 6: Flat-rate book time
10. Leak 7: Mobile Diesel Repair Billing Rate — Wage vs. Owner Gap
11. Leak 8: Minimum Wage Floor Guarantee Under Flat Rate
12. Leak 9: Mobile ownership premium
13. Leak 10: Dealership vs. independent shop rate gap
14. Leak 11: Specialty premium — diesel/European/EV
15. More leaks to check
16. Grow it: the next rung
17. The household side: TrueNET
18. Your 30-day leak plan
19. Take it into LeakReceipts
20. Sources
21. Your leak log

The short answer for your trade

Two technicians doing the identical repair under the identical flat-rate system can take home very different real hourly pay — the difference is how fast they work against the book, not how skilled they are.

Your leak map

Every leak this book covers, biggest first. The size grade is VyRal's research grade for how much money a leak tends to move in this trade. It is a grade, not a dollar figure. Your own paper sets the dollars.

#	Leak	Size grade	Evidence	Fixes
1	Flat-Rate/Flag-Rate Pay — Unpaid Non-Flagged Time	Major	VERIFIED	1
2	Diesel Mechanic Pay Benchmark	Significant	VERIFIED	1
3	Self-employment tax set-aside, for independent/mobile owners	Major	STRUCTURAL	1
4	Self-Employment Tax — truck and tooling are what shrink the base	Significant	STRUCTURAL	1
5	Pride Economy — Tools & Rig	Small but common	STRUCTURAL	1
6	Flat-rate book time	Major	STILL BEING MEASURED	1
7	Mobile Diesel Repair Billing Rate — Wage vs. Owner Gap	Major	STILL BEING MEASURED	1
8	Minimum Wage Floor Guarantee Under Flat Rate	Significant	STILL BEING MEASURED	1
9	Mobile ownership premium	Significant	STILL BEING MEASURED	1
10	Dealership vs. independent shop rate gap	Moderate	STILL BEING MEASURED	1
11	Specialty premium — diesel/European/EV	Moderate	STILL BEING MEASURED	1

Then there are 3 more leaks to check, each with its own fixes, in the chapter called More leaks to check.

What people in your trade say hurts

Before we built a single fix, we went and read what people in this trade say out loud: forums, trade press, regulators' complaint files and court records. These are the pains that kept coming up, the ones with the most sources first. If one of them is yours, you're not imagining it.

Engine makers' diagnostic software costs me a fortune or locks me out

To fix modern trucks I need the makers' software and subscriptions, one per brand. Independents pay yearly fees the dealer doesn't, or can't do some resets at all, so the job goes to the dealer.

Found in 5 public sources; newest dated 2026-06-21. VERIFIED count from VyRal's public research log; the sources are listed at the back.

Parts cost more every month, so my quote is stale before the job is done

I quote a repair, then the parts come in higher than when I priced it. Either I eat the difference or I go back to the customer for more, and without a signed OK they argue the bill.

Found in 5 public sources; newest dated 2026-08-26. VERIFIED count from VyRal's public research log; the sources are listed at the back.

Flat-rate pay leaves my diagnostic and waiting hours unpaid

In a shop on flat rate I'm paid book hours, not clock hours. Time chasing a fault, waiting on parts or redoing a comeback can earn nothing, and a slow week can drop my real hourly pay below the legal floor.

Found in 4 public sources; newest dated 2026-09-30. VERIFIED count from VyRal's public research log; the sources are listed at the back.

I find the problem fast and then can't charge for the finding

Most of my skill is in finding the fault. When the fix itself takes minutes, customers balk at paying for the diagnosis, so I give it away or under-bill it.

Found in 4 public sources; newest dated 2026-01-01. VERIFIED count from VyRal's public research log; the sources are listed at the back.

I owe the tool truck every week for tools I need to do the job

Techs usually buy their own tools. The truck that comes to the shop sells on weekly payments, and the balance and interest pile up. It feels like part of the job, but it comes out of my pay every week.

Found in 4 public sources; newest dated 2026-01-01. VERIFIED count from VyRal's public research log; the sources are listed at the back.

My service truck burns diesel to every call and my call-out fee never moved

As a mobile mechanic I drive to the broken truck. Fuel and drive time cost me on every call, and when diesel jumps my trip charge doesn't. Long drives to roadside calls eat the hour I bill.

Found in 4 public sources; newest dated 2026-09-28. VERIFIED count from VyRal's public research log; the sources are listed at the back.

My trucking customers are going under and leaving repair bills unpaid

My customers are small carriers and owner-operators squeezed by fuel and rates. When one folds, my invoice is just one more unpaid bill. If I let the truck roll before I'm paid, my lien rights get weaker.

Found in 4 public sources; newest dated 2026-04-24. VERIFIED count from VyRal's public research log; the sources are listed at the back.

Get your paper together

Every fix in this book starts with paper, not memory. Memory rounds in the other side's favor. Paper doesn't.

Pull the last 90 days. Put it all in one folder, paper or phone, and label each piece with its date. Black out account numbers and Social Security numbers before you share anything with anyone.

The paper that proves each leak:

- Your contracts, invoices, statements, pay records and the messages around them.

My folder checklist

Last 90 days of statements or pay records _____

Every contract or agreement I work under _____

Every invoice, ticket or settlement for the same 90 days _____

The messages that changed a price, a scope or a date _____

Leak 1: Flat-Rate/Flag-Rate Pay — Unpaid Non-Flagged Time

Size grade: Major · Evidence: VERIFIED

What it is. Flat-rate (flag-rate) pay compensates a mechanic only for hours flagged against a job's published labor-time guide, not actual hours worked. A 2013 California Court of Appeal ruling did not make flat-rate pay itself unlawful; it held that in California, shops may have to pay mechanics separately, at least minimum wage, for non-flagged time such as waiting and other nonproductive work — check with your state labor department.

Why it leaks. A mechanic can work a full 8-hour shift and only get paid for 5 flagged hours if diagnostics or parts delays ate the rest — and in some states, that unpaid gap may break the wage rules, not just be bad luck; check with your state labor department.

The number to hold it against. In California, flat-rate (piece-rate) pay is lawful, but techs must be paid separately at least minimum wage for waiting and other nonproductive time; averaging across the week is not allowed. Source: Gonzalez v. Downtown LA Motors, 215 Cal.App.4th 36 (2013); Cal. Labor Code §226.2.

VERIFIED · Primary — government or regulator

> **Ask yourself:** In a typical week, how many hours do you actually work versus how many hours you get paid for under flat rate?

1. Flat-rate pay: clock hours with no flag hours (diagnostics, parts waits) left unpaid

Fix approved · leak evidence: Verified

Fix 1 — Do it yourself (free).

1. Pull your last 8 weeks of pay stubs and your own clock-in/clock-out record (shop time clock printout, or your phone notes).
2. For each week write two numbers: hours on the clock and flag hours paid. The difference is your non-flagged time.
3. Divide each week's total gross pay by hours on the clock. That is your real hourly rate for the week.
4. Check it against the minimum wage that applies where you work (federal is $7.25, many states are higher).

5. If you work in California: the law there (Labor Code 226.2) says piece-rate workers must be paid SEPARATELY for nonproductive time like waiting on parts, and your pay stub must show those hours, the rate and the pay. Check whether your stub has those lines.
6. If the numbers show a gap, ask payroll in writing (letter below). Whether you have a legal claim is a call for your state labor agency or an attorney, not us.

Fix 2 — The words to send, under your own name. Fill in the brackets, keep a copy, and send it from your own email or by mail. Nobody sends it for you.

> To: [SHOP OWNER / PAYROLL NAME], [SHOP NAME]
> From: [YOUR NAME], Tech #[Your tech number]
> Date: [DATE]
> Subject: Request for my hours and flag-hour records, [START DATE] to [END DATE]
>
> Hi [NAME],
>
> I'm checking my own pay records and need help matching them up. Please send me, for each week from [START DATE] to [END DATE]:
> 1. My total hours clocked in.
> 2. My flag hours paid.
> 3. How time I spent on diagnostics, waiting for parts, shop cleanup and other non-repair work was paid, and at what rate.
>
> By my own records, in the week of [WEEK] I was clocked in [CLOCK HOURS] hours and paid for [FLAG HOURS] flag hours. I'd like to understand how the other [DIFFERENCE] hours were paid.
>
> Could you send this by [Date, 7-10 days out]? A printout or email is fine.
>
> Thanks,
> [YOUR NAME]
> [PHONE]

Fix 3 — Done for you. LeakReceipts · Pay Check

WE DO: read your pay stubs and time records side by side, week by week, and lay out clock hours, flag hours, non-flagged hours and your real hourly rate; flag any week under the minimum wage that applies to you; draft the records request; and, if you choose, build the packet (stubs, time records, your weekly table) for your state labor agency or the US Department of Labor. YOU DO: send the request, decide whether to file anything, and file it yourself.

Keep it closed. Keep your own daily clock-in/clock-out note and flag hours per repair order, starting today. Before taking a flat-rate job, ask in writing how

non-repair time (diagnostics, parts waits, shop work) is paid.

What this fix can't decide for you. We do not say whether you have a legal claim; that is the labor agency's or an attorney's call. California's separate-pay rule (226.2) is California only; federal law measures minimum wage by the workweek (US DOL whd opinion letter, 17 Jul 1975). We do not say the shop broke the law. We don't name the shop.

My receipt for this leak			
Owed by my paper	Paid or billed	Gap (CALCULATED: owed – paid)	Fix 2 sent · answer

FREE FIRST CHAPTER

That's Leak 1 of 11.

The full Field Guide for Diesel & Mobile Mechanics walks through every leak on the map you just read: why it happens, the paper that proves it, and three fixes for each one — one you do yourself for free, the words to send under your own name, and what LeakReceipts can do for you while the decision stays yours.

Get the full guide:
leakreceipts.com/ebooks/diesel-and-mobile-mechanics

Run it on your own numbers:
leakreceipts.com

WE WALK BY FAITH NOT BY SIGHT — 2 Corinthians 5:7