

1. Licensing

Licensing rules are set by each state, and sometimes by the county or city. Start here.

Check with your city or county and your state before anything else on this list. Whether window cleaning needs its own license, registration or permit is decided locally. This kit does not list any place's rules.

- ☐ **Get a business license or registration.** Ask your city or county (usually the clerk or the business license office) what you need where the business is based, and whether each city you work in needs its own.
- ☐ **Ask whether anything else is required.** Ask your state licensing board and your city or county whether window cleaning, work at height, or work on commercial buildings needs a separate license, registration or permit where you work.
- ☐ **Ask about working at the street.** If you set a ladder on a sidewalk or park in front of a storefront, ask your city or county whether a permit or other rules apply.
- ☐ **Put renewal dates on your calendar.** Keep a copy of every license, registration and permit in one folder.
- ☐ **Find out whether your license number must appear** on estimates, invoices, ads and the vehicle.
- ☐ **Before you hire anyone, check the ladder and fall protection rules for workers.** Look at OSHA ([osha.gov](https://www.osha.gov)) and your state's workplace safety agency for the ladder and height rules that cover employees. They differ by state and by job. Write down what applies and set your safety rules before the first hire.

2. Business setup

- ☐ **Choose a business structure:** sole proprietor, LLC or corporation. The right one depends on your state, your taxes and your risk, so talk to an accountant or attorney first.
- ☐ **Register your business name** if you use one other than your own legal name. Ask your state or county where.
- ☐ **Get your free EIN (Employer Identification Number) from the IRS at irs.gov.** The IRS does not charge for it. Do not pay a website to get one for you.
- ☐ **Open a business bank account.** Keep business and personal money apart and run every business payment through it.
- ☐ **Set up bookkeeping before your first job.** Pick a spreadsheet, accounting software or a bookkeeper. Record every sale and expense and keep your receipts.
- ☐ **Ask your accountant how much to set aside for taxes** and when to pay. Set up a separate savings account for it.
- ☐ **Ask whether you must collect sales tax** on window cleaning where you work, and how to register if so. The rules differ by state.
- ☐ **Ask before you bring on a helper** whether they would be an employee or an independent contractor, and what payroll steps follow. Your state labor department or an accountant can tell you.
- ☐ **Get a business phone number and email address** so customers never reach your personal ones.