



MI DEPARTMENT OF ATTORNEY GENERAL

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Michigan's Towing Laws

The purpose of this presentation is to provide an overview of Michigan's towing laws, how to properly retrieve a vehicle that has been towed, and how to report unlawful towing or unreasonable fees.

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[Michigan.gov/consumerprotection](https://michigan.gov/consumerprotection)

What You Need to Know

- You can find a list of towing situations and fees in the Motor Vehicle Code, MCL 257.252a.
- A vehicle towed can be towed from private or public property.
- Vehicle owners are responsible for storage fees.
- Private property owners can have vehicles towed. They must follow specific posting guidelines.
- Tow companies share the vehicle's new location with local police.

What You Need to Know, cont.

- Within 24 hours, the police determine if the vehicle was reported stolen. It gets added to the law enforcement information network. The vehicle gets marked as an abandoned vehicle. The police update the Secretary of State.
- Vehicles involved in accidents must be claimed within 20 days. After that, it is labeled as an abandoned vehicle.
- A vehicle owner must go through the legal process to get their vehicle back. They can also try challenging it in court.

Private Property notice

A private property owner must post a notice before towing a vehicle without the owner's consent. The notice must:

- (a) be prominently displayed at each point of entry for vehicular access. If the property lacks curbs or access barriers, not less than 1 notice shall be posted for each 100 feet of road frontage.
- (b) clearly indicate in letters not less than 2 inches high on a contrasting background that unauthorized vehicles will be towed at the owner's expense.
- (c) provide the name and telephone number of the towing service.
- (d) be permanently installed with the bottom of the notice located not less than 4 feet from the ground and continuously maintained on the property for not less than 24 hours before a vehicle is towed.

Secretary of State Notice

- The Secretary of State must notify owners by mail within seven days.
- The mail goes to the owner listed on the title. Anyone else listed on the title receives a copy of the notice. A secured party is normally a bank or credit union.

What's in the notice:

- Where the vehicle was towed from.
- Towing company name.
- Address of where the vehicle is now.
- How to claim the vehicle.
- How to challenge the towing.
- How to challenge the towing and storage fees; and
- How to file with the court.

How Do I Find the Location of My Vehicle?

You can find the location of your vehicle and the custodian online. Enter the vehicle's identification number (VIN) or license plate number on the [Secretary of State's Michigan Abandoned Vehicle Search](#). You can also contact the Abandoned Vehicle Help Desk at 517-636-5234.

How Do I Get Personal Items Out of My Towed Vehicle?

- The company storing the vehicle must allow the owner to inspect the vehicle. And to get their items out for free, for the first visit. After that, they can't charge the owner more than \$25 per time.

How Do I Redeem My Vehicle?

To redeem your vehicle as the owner, you must:

- Visit the custodian holding the vehicle within 20 days of the notice. A custodian can be the police agency, towing company, or impound lot.
- Take your title or registration with you. They may ask you to prove that the vehicle is yours.
- Pay towing and storage fees. You may be charged a \$40 abandoned vehicle fee.

Warning: *You have 20 days from the notice date to request a hearing. **But after 10 days**, a secured party can redeem the vehicle by paying all fees.*

If you or the secured party do not redeem the vehicle or request a hearing within 20 days, it may be sold at public auction. You will lose all rights to the vehicle. At least five days before any sale, public notice will be published in a newspaper. It is published in the county where the vehicle was towed.

How Do I Challenge a Tow or The Reasonableness of Fees?

- Towing and storage fees are normally set by the agreement between the police agency and the towing company. Residents should contact the police agency involved in the towing to verify fees. We also recommend you review your insurance policy or contact your agent to see if your policy covers towing costs.
- You have the right to challenge whether your vehicle was properly towed and the reasonableness of towing and storage fees. This must be done in a timely manner and in an appropriate district court.

How Do I File a Petition with the Court?

File a petition in the district court that has jurisdiction over the location where your car was towed.

- You must file your petition within 20 days from the abandoned vehicle notice date.
- You will be responsible for applicable court filing fees. The petition and instructions for how to fill it out are included with the mailed notice. They are also available on the [Petition Regarding Impoundment of Motor Vehicle \(DC90\) form \(PDF\)](#).
- If you request a hearing, you can get your vehicle back while you are awaiting the hearing outcome. Before you get it back you must:
 - post a towing and storage bond with the court. This will include the accrued towing and storage fees; or
 - pay the abandoned vehicle fees and the accrued towing and storage fees to the custodian of your vehicle.
- If the court finds that your vehicle was improperly towed, you will be reimbursed for the towing and storage fees. The abandoned vehicle fee will also be returned.

Towing Complaints

Attorney General's Office Complaints

You may file complaints with the Michigan Attorney General's Consumer Protection Team. If your complaint involves a tow that was directed by the police or a private property owner, and you want to contest the tow and unreasonable fees, then you must follow the process outlined above and file a petition for a court hearing.

Local Police Agency Complaints

If the police direct the tow, you can also complain to the local police agency. It can take appropriate action against the towing company if fees or other conduct by the towing company violates an agreement between the police agency and the company.

Checking Operating Authority

The Michigan State Police (MSP) regulate all towing companies that operate in Michigan. MSP's Commercial Vehicle Enforcement Division (CVED) processes towing company applications to operate. Towing companies must submit active liability insurance, worker's compensation insurance, or an approved exemption. You may [check operating authority by visiting the CVED's Intrastate Carrier Authority Registration System website](#). Questions can be directed to the CVED at 517-284-3250.

CONTACT US

To file a complaint with the Attorney General, or get additional information, contact:

Consumer Protection Team

P.O. Box 30213

Lansing, MI 48909

517-335-7599

Fax: 517-241-3771

Toll-free: 877-765-8388

[Online complaint form](#)

[Michigan.gov/consumerprotection](https://michigan.gov/consumerprotection)

