
Austin Tow Scams

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A “WRECKER DRIVER” CANNOT FORCE YOU TO GET OUT OF “YOUR” VEHICLE IN AUSTIN!

The City of Austin regulates the drop and towing fee that towing companies may charge in Austin. You are urged if possible to catch the wrecker driver hooking up your vehicle in a parking lot and demand they release it. If they demand any money but your vehicle is not “fully loaded ready to transport” as shown in our video or pictures on this page, immediately call 911 and take pictures of your vehicle with a cellphone for evidence to show the Police. The pictures you want to take are the stage at which you caught the wrecker driver hooking up your vehicle. The Austin Towing Ordinance and State Law requires a wrecker driver to release your vehicle for FREE if the vehicle is “not fully ready to be towed down the street”, as shown in this video. Should a wrecker driver demand any money to release your vehicle still in the parking lot, GET INSIDE YOUR VEHICLE, LOCK THE DOORS and CALL 911 IMMEDIATELY! Tell the 911 Call Taker the driver is trying charge an unauthorized fee and please send a policeman.

You are urged to call 512-974-5000 to file an offense report for a wrecker ordinance violation for being charged an unauthorized fee by the wrecker driver or suspect your vehicle was illegally towed, if towed from a private parking lot or any public street or right of way by any towing company. (unless directed by a police officer) The Austin Police Department has two detectives specially trained to determine if the towing company, wrecker driver or parking facility committed a criminal offense or violated city ordinance when towing your vehicle. You will need to meet with the detective assigned to your case and give a written statement, so the investigation may begin. If you fail to report this criminal behavior, the same wrecker driver, that forced you to pay your hard earned money, will continue to steal from the public, in this case, it could be a family member or friend. Don't be surprised if either detective informs you they do not file criminal charges against the parking facility, even though other law enforcement agencies do.

The majority of Austin towing companies use “legal” towing signs, although, there are a few who don't use legal signs because they fail to state, “Unauthorized Vehicles Will Be Towed at Owner or Operator Expense” without any words added to this required phrase. The first thing you want to do, after finding your vehicle has been towed, is find the towing sign to check for this required phrase and where it is posted. The towing sign can be no farther than 25' from the street facing the driver when entering the parking facility. These towing signs are not required to be posted within the parking facility where you may have parked. Another widely abused practice by towing companies is towing vehicles from illegally marked restricted or designated parking spaces. These types of parking spaces MUST be marked in the front and back of the parking space and if posted off the pavement, cannot be any higher than 7' off the ground. It is not uncommon that a “spotter” is watching the parking lot you may have been towed from, so it's important to watch where you park and adhere to the towing sign. The Austin Police Department seldom enforces the State Law mandated text or the towing symbol that must be on the sign.

Should you want to contest the towing of your vehicle, as entitled to by State Law, you can file in any Justice of the Peace within Travis County. It is advised and recommended that you do not file for a tow hearing in JP Precinct 4 for any reason as this Judge has a chronic history of issuing rulings in favor of towing companies even with a clear violation of State Law. We do not recommend tow hearings, as towing companies bring witnesses that lie in Court. It is much easier to sue the parking facility, not the towing company, for statutory violations of the towing law. You do not have to prove negligence of the parking facility. Statutory violations are worth \$1600 if towed in Austin with one day of storage. Our attorneys will take your statutory violation case on contingency and there is no statute of limitations when pursuing this route to recover \$1000 plus triple what you paid to get your vehicle released or charged a drop fee.