
Drop Fee Scam

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In every city in Texas where private property towing exist, some wrecker drivers will scam motorists for a drop fee even when they are not entitled to. Since a majority of vehicle owners have no clue the regulations wrecker drivers must obey, the photographs below are when **you should never** pay the wrecker driver a drop fee in the parking lot. (If a wrecker driver attempts to charge you a fee, treat the incident as you are being robbed and take the necessary action)



Must release for free



Must release for free



Must release for free



Must release free



Must release for free



Must release for free



Must release for free



Must release for free



Must release for free



Must release for free



Must release for free



Must release for free

In the photographs above, important components must be on or connected to the vehicle, of which are the tow lights, safety chains, dollies in raised position (front and four wheel drive vehicles), hooked up to vehicle, merely backed up to a vehicle is not grounds to charge a drop fee. Should you encounter an illegal drop fee, [please file a complaint](#) against the towing company.

In the photographs **below**, are examples of when you must pay the wrecker driver, the fees are regulated in most cities, while the State of Texas sets the maximum rates. Always demand a receipt and be cautious about giving your credit card number to a wrecker driver. For the most part, the majority of most wrecker drivers are honest, while the others are out to steal or take your vehicle.

Do not hesitate calling 911 to avoid a potential deadly encounter with a wrecker driver in a parking lot.

Tow Truck Operator must accept cash, debit cards and credit cards.



Must pay, they must accept cash, credit & debit cards



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Most cities regulate the drop fee which are lower than the state maximum.

86.455. Private Property Tow Fees. (New section adopted effective September 1, 2010. 35 TexReg 7788; amended effective January 16, 2012, 37 TexReg 116)

(c) If the owner, authorized operator, or authorized agent of the owner of a motor vehicle that is parked without the authorization of the property owner attempts to retrieve the motor vehicle before its removal from the property or parked location, the maximum amount that may be charged for a drop charge (if the motor vehicle is hooked up) is:

- (1) light duty tows — \$125;
- (2) medium duty tows — \$175; and
- (3) heavy duty tows — \$225.

(d) If an owner, authorized operator, or authorized agent of the owner of a motor vehicle is present before the removal from the property or parked location the towing operator shall advise the owner, authorized operator, or authorized agent of the owner of a motor vehicle that he or she may offer payment of the towing drop charge.

(e) For purposes of this section, a tow company must accept cash, credit cards and debit cards as payment for the drop charge.

If the tow truck operator drives away without giving you the chance to pay a drop fee, please file a complaint against them.

Q&A

1. What is a drop fee?

A drop fee is a charge offered instead of a towing fee that allows the vehicle operator to stop the tow without paying the full tow charge and additional storage charges.

2. What does the term “hooked up” mean?

Hooked up means the vehicle is fully prepared for transport by attachment to a tow truck, lifted in tow position, with tow lights and safety chains attached and, if required, placed on a dolly in a raised position and the only thing remaining is for the tow operator to drive away.

3. What does the phrase vehicle owner or representative “attempts to retrieve the motor vehicle” mean?

For purposes of paying the drop charge, the terms vehicle owner or representative means any person who offers to pay the drop charge to stop the tow. Attempt to retrieve the motor vehicle means any verbal request that a reasonable person would understand to mean, “Do not tow my car.”

4. What does the phrase “before its removal from the property” mean?

The phrase “before its removal from the property” refers to vehicles parked on property other than a public roadway. Until the tow truck enters a public street, road or highway, the vehicle owner or operator has an absolute right to regain possession of the vehicle by payment of the drop charge.

5. What does the phrase “before its removal from the parked location” mean?

The phrase “before its removal from the parked location” refers to vehicles parked on a public roadway. Until the vehicle is hooked up, as described in the definition of hooked up, and the tow operator drives away, the vehicle has not been moved from its parked location.

6. Can I charge a drop fee if the owner or operator arrives to move the vehicle before I have it fully hooked up?

No. You must allow the owner or operator to move the vehicle.

7. Can I charge a drop fee if the owner or operator arrives after the car is hooked up but before I’ve left the property or its parked location?

Yes. You must tell the owner or operator that they can pay you on the spot to drop the vehicle.

8. Do I have to offer to unhook the vehicle for a drop fee, if the owner or operator arrives when the vehicle is in tow, but before I’ve left the property?

Yes. If the vehicle is fully hooked up and you are in transport, but you are still on the property, you are required to tell the owner or operator that they may pay a drop fee.

9. Do I have to offer to unhook the vehicle for a drop fee, if the owner or operator arrives after I’ve left the property with the vehicle in tow?

No, once you are in transport on a public roadway off the property, you may proceed to a licensed vehicle storage facility.

10. What form of payment can an owner or operator use to pay for a drop fee?

Tow Truck Operator must accept cash, debit cards and credit cards, if they don't accept all three, file a complaint.