



MARYLAND TOWING PROTECTIONS

GETTING OFF THE HOOK OF A PREDATORY TOW

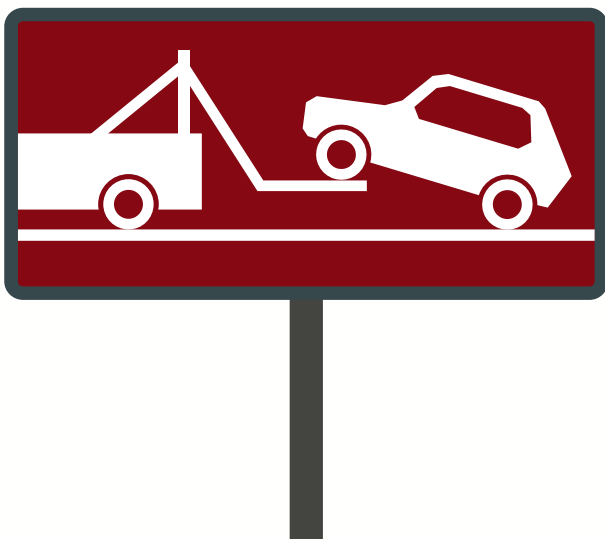
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Every year, millions of Americans have their cars towed. And while returning to a parking space to find a vehicle missing is enough to make your stomach drop, it's only the beginning of a much larger ordeal. Our research points to two broad issues facing consumers: An alarmingly high number of states have no protections spelled out on towing issues. In addition, too many states have inadequate protections, or the laws on the books are vague and inaccessible to the average consumer.

Towing laws aren't something most of us pay attention to until a tow affects us or someone we know. Maryland PIRG Foundation identified 14 common sense towing protections that should be available to consumers. These questions address some of the most frequently searched towing concerns, ranging from who is responsible for damages caused by careless towing, to the maximum rates and fees owed, to whether you are guaranteed the option to pay by credit card.

Here's a look at where Maryland stands with its towing protections.



Q. What is the maximum towing rate?

A. Towers can charge twice the total fees allowed by the subdivision for public safety tows. If the subdivision has not set rates, towers can charge \$250.

Q. What is the maximum storage rate?

A. Towers can charge the fees normally set by the subdivision. If the subdivision has not set rates, towers can charge \$30 per day.

Q. Where are towing companies required to publicly display their rates?

A. "Tow-away" signs

Q. Who are towing companies required to notify?

A. Vehicle owner, insurer and law enforcement

Q. Are towing companies required to accept major credit cards?

A. Towers are not required to accept credit cards if there's an ATM on the property.

Q. Are clear tow-away signs required in private parking areas?

A. Yes

Q. Is a picture required of the parked vehicle before towing?

A. Yes



Q. If the owner returns before their car is towed, is the tower required to release the vehicle?

A. Yes, for a drop fee no greater than half of the towing cost.

Q. When is a vehicle owner able to retrieve their car?

A. 24/7 with notice

Q. Are towing companies required to allow owners access to their personal items in a towed vehicle?

A. Yes, all items

Q. If a vehicle tow is proven illegal, what compensation is the owner entitled to?

A. Triple the cost of recovering the vehicle

Q. If a vehicle is damaged during the towing or storage process, is the tow company required to reimburse the owner for damages?

A. Yes

Q. Can towing companies patrol/scan private property for illegally parked cars?

A. Yes