

TOWING SERVICES GUIDE

HOW TO GET YOUR CAR OFF THE HOOK

If you drive a car, you may one day need to have your car towed or, worse, discover your car has been towed.

The NYC Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) licenses private companies that tow cars that block private driveways, are parked on private property, are immobilized after an accident, have been stolen or appear to be abandoned, or have broken down.

(Some companies are exempt from licensing. Their trucks must sport an exemption sticker. Tow trucks with an exemption sticker are not permitted to tow a consumer's vehicle.)

The New York Police Department tows vehicles that are in violation of NYC parking, standing, and stopping laws and restrains vehicles with outstanding parking and camera violation judgments. The NYC Sheriff's Office and NYC Marshals employed by the City of New York tow vehicles whose owners have outstanding parking and red light camera judgments totaling more than \$350. [Visit the Department of Finance website for more information about towed vehicles](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dof/html/parking/park_towed_vehicles.shtml) (link to: http://www.nyc.gov/html/dof/html/parking/park_towed_vehicles.shtml)

DCA also licenses private companies that boot cars parked in private lots or on private streets when the cars violate posted parking rules.

BEFORE DEALING WITH PRIVATE TOWING SERVICES ...

When hiring, look for licensed tow companies.

[Visit the check license page](#) (link to: Consumers_CheckLicense.docx) or call 311 to make sure a towing firm is licensed. If you use an unlicensed company, you may not be able to get your money back if you are ripped off.

Before you allow a private tow truck to hook your car, check the driver's side of the vehicle for the company's name, address, phone number, and DCA license medallion. The medallion is a metal plate. If this information is not displayed, the truck is either unlicensed or in violation of licensing rules and should be reported to the City. [File a complaint with DCA](#) (link to: Consumers_FileComplaint.docx)

Keep a record of the tow truck's medallion number. In addition, every tow truck driver must carry his or her DCA tow truck driver's license at all times. If you have a complaint about a specific driver, get his or her license number and [file a complaint with DCA](#) (link to: Consumers_FileComplaint.docx).

Carefully check the forms you sign.

Sign only an Authorization to Tow form or towing bill receipt issued by the licensed towing firm. You are not required to sign an Authorization to Repair form in order to get your car towed.

Always read forms carefully before you sign them. If you sign a "Designated Representative" form, you are designating the towing company to represent your interests with your insurance company. You are never required to sign a "Designated Representative" form. For any work you want done, get the details in writing. Never sign a blank form.

Be sure the tow truck driver gives you a copy of the Consumer Bill of Rights Regarding Towing, as required by law.

Choose your own repair shop.

You have the right to have your car repaired by whomever you choose.

If you don't want the towing firm to fix your car, clearly tell the truck driver not to repair it. Don't sign the towing firm's "Authorization to Repair" form.

If your insurer refers you to a repair shop, the insurer is responsible for the adequacy of the repairs. (In some cases, having the car repaired by anyone other than an authorized dealer may void your warranty or extended care agreement.)

Check your car carefully before it is towed. Note any damage to your car before it is towed. Take out all valuables, including those in the trunk and glove compartment.

Get a clearly itemized bill. You will need it if you want to challenge any charges. Also, your insurance company may require it.

Don't accept "cash only." By law, towing companies must accept at least two major credit cards for payment for towing services.

ACCIDENTS

If you are in an accident or break down on the highway, you must use a licensed towing firm called by the police. You may not call your own tow truck. The truck summoned by the police is the only one that may respond under New York City's "Directed Accident Response Program" (DARP). But the towing firm, by law, must take your car wherever you say, within New York City. Be sure the authorization you sign specifies towing only, not repairs or other services.

Any other tow truck that appears at the accident scene is acting illegally. Advise the officer on the scene, or report such activity to your local police precinct. Make a note of the tow driver's name, license plate number, and any other identifying information.

BREAKDOWNS

If your car breaks down, call a DCA-licensed tow company of your choice. Unlike rates charged by the City's DARP program, which are regulated, firms you choose can charge market rates.

If time permits, call around to different towing firms to compare prices. An inexpensive or free towing service may be available from an auto club, your insurance company, or your car's manufacturer.

PRIVATE LOTS

If a sign is posted that a parking lot is reserved for customers only and you visit any other business, even for a few minutes, your car may be towed.

TOW PROGRAMS

The City's rotation tow program (ROTOW) regulates towing fees for stolen vehicles that have been recovered or vehicles that have been abandoned.

DCA regulates the City's DARP and ROTOW towing programs.

DARP and ROTOW rate caps

DARP towing rates

- Vehicles registered at 10,000 pounds or less, for tow to storage facility: \$125
- Vehicles registered at more than 10,000 pounds: \$140
- First three days of storage: \$25 per day
- Fourth day of storage and after: \$27 per day
- Towing to location other than tower's storage facility: add \$4.00 per mile plus tolls

ROTOW towing rates

- Vehicle registered at 10,000 pounds or less: \$125
- More than 10,000 pounds: \$140
- First three days of storage: \$25 per day
- Fourth day and after: \$27 per day

Towing rates from private parking lot

- Towing and three days of storage: \$125
- Fourth day of storage and after: \$15 per day
- "Drop fee" (for unhooking a car that is about to be towed): \$62.50

If your car is towed for blocking a driveway, the maximum fee is \$125 plus tax and \$15 per day storage fee after three days.

WHO TO CONTACT WHEN YOUR CAR IS ...

... towed from a shopping center or other private property - Look for a posted sign with the name and number of the company that towed your car. Call the company to retrieve your vehicle. If you can't find a sign, call the local police precinct.

... towed from a driveway that you blocked - Call the local police precinct.

... towed from the street for a parking or traffic violation - [Visit the Department of Finance website](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dof/html/parking/park_towed_vehicles.shtml) (link to: http://www.nyc.gov/html/dof/html/parking/park_towed_vehicles.shtml) or call 311

... booted at a parking lot or a private street - Look for a posted sign saying which booting company applied the boot or wheel lock. Contact the company to have the boot removed. The company must remove the boot within 30 minutes, must accept payment by credit card, and may charge no more than \$25.

If your car is booted and towed from a private parking lot, the maximum fee remains \$25.

There is no maximum rate for booting on private streets. The booting fee for private streets must be on file with DCA. The fee must be conspicuously posted on signs at all entry access streets that intersect with public streets.

If your car is missing and you are not sure why, call 311 or call or visit the local police precinct where the car was parked.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Contact DCA to [file a complaint](#) (link to: Consumers_FileComplaint.docx) about a private towing or booting company.

To see if a private towing or booting firm is licensed, [visit the check license page](#) (link to: Consumers_CheckLicense.docx) or call 311.

To file a complaint about auto repairs, call the New York State Department of Motor Vehicles, (518) 474-8943.