

WAC 204-91A-140 Fees. (1) Towing fees must be based on a flat, hourly rate only and will apply without regard to the hour of day, day of the week or whether the service was performed on a Saturday, Sunday, or state recognized holiday. The hourly rate for each class of truck must be charged for services performed for initial tows and secondary tows performed during business hours. Charges for secondary tows performed during nonbusiness hours, on weekends or state recognized holidays, if different from the hourly rate, must be negotiated and agreed upon with the vehicle owner/agent before the tow is made.

The tow inspector will investigate allegations of overcharging. Intentional overcharging or a pattern of overcharging will be cause for suspension. The tow operator's failure to reimburse the aggrieved customer(s) may be cause for suspension, after a tow inspector has determined that overcharging occurred and may result in the suspension or revocation of the tow operators letter of appointment. The suspension will remain in effect until the tow operator has presented to the patrol sufficient proof that the aggrieved customer(s) has been fully reimbursed.

(2) The chief or designee will, prior to October 15th of each year, establish maximum hourly towing rates for each class of tow truck and maximum daily storage rates that tow operators may charge for services performed as a result of state patrol calls. The maximum rates will be determined after consultation with members of the towing industry, review of current private towing rates, and such other economic factors as the chief deems appropriate.

When signed by the chief or designee and the tow operator, a contractual agreement to charge no more than the maximum rates will become part of the operator's letter of appointment. The tow operator may, however, adopt a rate schedule charging less than the maximum rates established by the chief.

The hourly rate must:

(a) Apply when a call for a tow is made by the state patrol, except as outlined under subsection (6) of this section. This includes, but may not be limited to, collisions and impound requests.

(b) Include all ancillary activities including, but not limited to, removal of glass, debris, and vehicle fluids less than one gallon from the roadway and areas referred to as the "scene or incident location," necessary winching, dolly service, drive line removal, installation of chains on the tow truck, installation of portable lights, vehicle hookup for towing or transporting, tire replacement and standby time. Before leaving any collision or incident location, the tow company must advise the department of transportation, the patrol, local law enforcement road department of all fluid spills greater than one gallon remaining.

(c) Include the labor of one person per truck. When responding with a class "C" or an S-1 rotator truck to a major collision or incident location; a second person is allowed at the hourly labor rate per contract for an extra registered tow truck operator employee. Any charges for additional labor or ancillary vehicles, or both, or for removing debris, cargo, or other items at the collision or incident location must have prior authorization from the legal or registered owner/agent, or a member of the patrol at the scene, and must have documentation in the vehicle transaction file for inspection purposes. Documentation must include:

(i) The first and last name of the person who requested the additional labor, ancillary vehicle, or removal of debris, cargo, or other items at the collision or incident location.

(ii) How and when the approval was obtained.

(d) Be computed from the actual time the truck departs in response to a call until the truck returns to its tow zone, responds to another call, returns to the storage area, or returns to the place of business of the registered tow truck operator. Billing invoices must have the time of day and date a vehicle arrives at the storage area or place of business of the registered tow truck operator.

The hourly rate must be applied to the resulting net time and, after the first hour, must be rounded to the nearest fifteen minutes. The operator may charge the hourly rate for the first hour or any fifteen minute portion thereof.

(e) Be evenly divided between customer vehicles transported when class "E" trucks are used for multiple towing/recovery services (one on bed, one in tow) from the same service call or incident location.

(3) The basic storage fee:

(a) Must be calculated using bumper to bumper measurements for vehicles, and using tongue to bumper measurements for trailers; and

(b) Must be calculated on a twenty-four-hour basis and must be charged to the nearest half day from the time the vehicle arrives at the secure storage area. Vehicles stored over twelve hours on any given day within the twenty-four-hour period may be charged a full day's storage. Vehicles stored less than twelve hours on any given day, may only be charged for twelve hours of storage; and

(c) Must be the same for all three and four-wheel vehicles twenty feet or less in length; and

(d) For vehicles or combinations exceeding twenty feet, the storage fee must be computed by multiplying each twenty feet of vehicle length, or any portion thereof, by the basic storage fee; and

(e) For motorcycles, operators may charge the basic storage fee for vehicles.

(4) To charge fees for ancillary equipment, additional labor, or removal of cargo and commodities that must be offloaded after placed in the storage area or registered tow truck operator's place of business for the purpose of disposal or storage, the operator must provide written notification of such fees to the legal owner, registered owner or owner's agent of the vehicle and must make a good faith attempt to gain prior authorization for estimated charges.

(a) Notification must include an itemized list of the estimated charges for any ancillary equipment, additional labor, or removal of cargo and commodities that must be offloaded after placed in the storage area or registered tow truck operator's place of business for the purpose of disposal or storage.

(b) Documentation must include:

(i) A copy of the written notification made to the legal owner, registered owner, or owner's agent.

(ii) Full name of the individual(s) contacted or attempted to be contacted for authorization for completion of additional labor, ancillary equipment, or removal of cargo or commodities for the purpose of disposal or storage.

(iii) The company representing the legal owner, registered owner, or owner's agent if applicable.

(iv) Date and time of each contact.

(v) Phone number and any other contact information that was available at the time of the contact.

(c) The patrol will provide the insurance information by request of the operator, if available.

(5) After hours release fee may be assessed if the tow operator or employee must be at the business location specifically for the purpose of releasing the vehicle and/or property on any weekday after 5 p.m. and before 8 a.m.; Saturday or Sunday; or on any state recognized holiday. After hour fees must:

(a) Be based on a flat, hourly rate;

(b) Be applied to the resulting net time and, after the first hour, must be rounded to the nearest fifteen minutes; and

(c) Be no more than one-half of the class "A" rate.

(6) (a) Any tow operator who charges the general public (i.e., private citizens) rates lower than those identified in the contractual agreement for the following services must charge the same lower rate for similar services performed as a result of patrol initiated calls:

(i) Roadside mechanical service including, but are not limited to, fuel transfer, tire and belt changes;

(ii) Disabled vehicle tow/transportation;

(iii) Storage;

(iv) After hours release fees.

(b) The price requirement in subsection (a)(i) through (iii) of this section does not apply to unoccupied vehicle situations in which the owner/operator has had no prior contact with either the state patrol or the tow operator.

(7) Upon redemption of a vehicle, an additional charge may not be assessed for moving or relocating any stored vehicle from inside a tow operator's storage yard to the front of the business establishment.

(8) Tolls and ferry fares paid by the tow operator or employee as a result of charges attributed to services provided during travel to and from a service call while using the shortest reasonable route, may be added as a separate line item to the tow bill. Added charges must be evidenced by a receipt or highlighted (i.e., "Good to Go" or "Wave to Go") on the transaction document and kept in the vehicle transaction file for inspection purposes.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 46.37.005, 46.55.050, and 46.55.115. WSR 14-17-104, § 204-91A-140, filed 8/19/14, effective 9/19/14; WSR 13-18-065, § 204-91A-140, filed 9/3/13, effective 10/4/13; WSR 09-09-118, § 204-91A-140, filed 4/21/09, effective 5/22/09. Statutory Authority: RCW 46.37.005 and 46.55.115. WSR 07-02-025A, § 204-91A-140, filed 12/22/06, effective 1/22/07. Statutory Authority: RCW 46.37.005. WSR 04-20-021, § 204-91A-140, filed 9/28/04, effective 10/29/04. Statutory Authority: RCW 46.37.005, 46.55.050, and 46.55.115. WSR 02-07-056, § 204-91A-140, filed 3/15/02, effective 4/15/02. Statutory Authority: RCW 46.37.005 and 46.55.050. WSR 97-08-021, § 204-91A-140, filed 3/25/97, effective 4/25/97. Statutory Authority: RCW 46.61.567. WSR 89-21-044, § 204-91A-140, filed 10/13/89, effective 11/13/89. Statutory Authority: RCW 46.35.005 [46.37.005]. WSR 89-14-015 (Order 89-04-ESR), § 204-91A-140, filed 6/23/89.]