

COVINGTON POLICE DEPARTMENT STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

Subject: TOWING SERVICES

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I. Purpose

To establish procedures and regulations of twenty-four (24) hour wrecker/towing service companies for the following:

- A. For inclusion on the rotation list;
- B. Maintenance of the rotation list;
- C. To set forth criteria by which the police department and wrecker/tow service companies should govern themselves
- D. To ensure the safe and efficient removal, storage, and safekeeping of any and all vehicles being towed by and placed into custody of such wrecker/towing service company.
- E. To establish procedure of removal/suspension from the wrecker/tow services rotation list.

II. Statement of Policy

It shall be the policy of the Covington Police Department to utilize towing services that have contracted with the City of Covington for such purposes and shall be on an on-call rotation 24 hours a day. It shall further be the policy of the Covington Police Department to establish standards and utilize only those wreckers/towing service companies whose equipment, procedures, and services conform to the safe and efficient removal of vehicles, in that:

- the wrecker/towing service is reputable, reliable, possesses necessary equipment and qualified employees;
- the wrecker/towing services is properly licensed and insured; and
- that all wrecker/towing services on the rotation list charge the same rates and are fair, equitable and reasonable rates for the services rendered.

III. Discussion

- A. In the course of providing traffic law enforcement related services to the City of Covington, it is frequently necessary to obtain the services of a wrecker/towing company due to incidents such as traffic accidents, criminal activity, abandoned vehicles, etc. When the owner/operator of a vehicle to be towed is not present to request a particular wrecker/towing company or the owner/operator is not familiar with any wrecker/towing company, the next list wrecker/towing company will be

utilized. This list will be maintained by the Covington Police Department and Covington/Newton 911.

- B. It shall be the responsibility of police officers and towing service operators to ensure that proper documentation is given from officers to the driver of the wrecker/towing service for the proper removal, storage and clearance of the vehicle being towed. Any holds or special instructions on a particular vehicle will be communicated and documented to the wrecker/towing service on the tow slip. Inventory of the vehicle will be performed and documented on the tow slip by the officer. If the vehicle is left on private property and not towed, it is the responsibility of the officer to notify dispatch and also document this action on a tow slip or an incident report.

IV. Requirements for Inclusion on the Rotation List

Any wrecker/towing service may submit a request to be included on the Covington Police Department's towing rotation list. Only five (5) wrecker/towing services will be on the rotation list at any given time. If there is an opening on the rotation list, a written request may be submitted by any wrecker/towing service to the Chief of Police for inclusion. Inclusion on the rotation list is strictly voluntary and should be considered to be a privilege and not a right. The Covington Police Department shall periodically review the towing services of each company. The Chief of Police shall be the final authority in all changes to the list. If there are no vacancies on the list, a wrecker/towing service may submit a request, in writing, to be placed on the waiting list.

- A. Written request to the Chief of Police to be included on the rotation list.
- B. Must be licensed to do business in the State of Georgia and the City of Covington and must furnish proof of such items.
- C. All drivers of the towing service must possess a valid Georgia driver's license. A list of all drivers and their driver's license numbers must be submitted to the Covington Police Department. A license check will be conducted and any drivers found to be suspended, revoked, or cancelled, the towing service will be notified.
- D. A criminal history check will be conducted on all owners of towing services who apply for inclusion on the Covington Police towing list. Applicants will be denied, who within the five years preceding the date of the application, have been convicted or pled guilty or entered a plea of nolo contendere to a crime constituting a felony, or who has falsified, concealed, or misrepresented any material portion of the application.

V. Administrative Requirements

- A. The Support Services Captain will keep a yearly updated copy of insurance certificates of all wrecker/towing service companies on the Covington Police towing list rotation. This insurance will specify the required limits of coverage on the wrecker(s), the impound lot, and structures that may house the impounded vehicles towed by the Covington Police Department.
- B. The Support Services Captain will, at the direction of the Chief of Police, remove or suspend any wrecker/towing service from the towing list that fails to keep proper insurance coverage.

- C. The Support Services Captain may, at the direction of the Chief of Police, remove or suspend any wrecker/towing service from the towing list that fails to provide adequate service in the requirements set forth.
- D. Once a wrecker/towing service has been removed or suspended, they will have 30 days to apply for reinstatement to the Chief of Police. If approved for reinstatement, a \$75.00 reinstatement fee will be charged to the towing service. Upon payment, the towing service will be reinstated and put back on the towing list rotation.
- E. Any towing service company, utilized by Covington Police Department, shall be properly licensed and insured, and maintain a business location within the city limits of Covington. The Support Services Captain will keep a yearly update of wrecker company insurance that specifies limits of coverage on the wrecker and the impound lot. At the direction of the Chief of Police, he will remove and/or suspend any towing service from the tow list that fails to keep proper insurance. The minimum liability insurance is as follows:
 - 1. Intrastate
 - a. \$100,000 per person
 - b. \$300,000 per accident
 - c. \$50,000 property
 - 2. Interstate
 - a. \$750,000 liability
 - b. MCS-90 (Proof of liability insurance)
- F. If any current towing services, upon the implementation of this policy, are outside the city limits, they may be "grandfathered" in.
- G. If a situation arises where other outside resources are needed (i.e. additional heavy wreckers) the Covington Police Department shall then notify Covington Newton 911 Communications who will dispatch accordingly.

VI. Tow and Storage Rates

- A. All rates charged for the removal and storage of vehicles will be consistent with all towing services on the rotation list. These rates will be determined and set forth and agreed on by the Chief of Police and the owners of the five (5) towing services. Once these rates have been determined, they will be used by each towing service until further. These rates will be charged until there is an agreement that the rates need to be changed.
 - 1. The current rate of \$150.00 is the flat fee to be used for towing for a standard vehicle. If there is extra cleanup or extra time in hooking up, then wrecker/tow service may apply additional charge to compensate. Documentation on the invoice is required.
 - 2. The current rate of \$20.00 per day is to be used for storage of standard vehicles.
 - 3. Any large commercial vehicles such as tractor trailers will be priced for job, including towing and storage by the wrecker/tow service.

- B. All towing rates and storage fees for vehicles towed by the Covington Police Department will be posted at the towing storage lot/business location for all of the public to see.
- C. If there is a need for a police vehicle to be towed to the city shop or a repair shop, a next list wrecker would be called to both tow the vehicle and be put back on top of the list, or invoice the Covington Police Department for the normal flat fee of \$150.00.

VII. Storage Facilities

Wrecker service companies shall be equipped to provide a fenced lot or building, with the vehicles impounded not visible from the street, for safe and proper storage in compliance with all state and local laws.

- 1. The storage facilities shall be located within the city limits.
- 2. The wrecker service shall be responsible for the storage, safe keeping, and prevention of vandalism of the vehicle and contents.
- 3. The storage facility shall be staffed between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00p.m. Monday through Friday.
- 4. A phone number must be provided at the business for call.

VIII. Call and Notification Procedures

- A. When an officer is dispatched to a collision, motor assist, abandoned vehicle, etc. or makes traffic stop which requires the need for the removal of such vehicle, the officer will do the following:
 - 1. Upon owner/operators request for a preferred wrecker on the police department's rotation list, the officer shall notify the dispatcher of such request.
 - 2. Ascertain from the owner/operator if someone can come get the vehicle in 10 minutes.
 - 3. If upon the officer's conclusion the vehicle can be removed in that time, the officer will have dispatch call for that person for removal.
 - 4. If the person picking up the vehicle does not arrive in the allotted time, the officer may call for a next list wrecker/tow services. Dispatch will notify next list wrecker/towing services advising the resting position and situation of the vehicle(s) and document on the wrecker log. Once the call is made, the wrecker/tow services will hook up the vehicle for removal.
 - 5. The officer will advise when the towing service is on location for the radio log. The officer will also advise when the wrecker has left the location.
 - 6. Soliciting or recommending a wrecker service by any member of the Covington Police Department shall be prohibited.
 - 7. Officer will complete a tow slip and give copies to the wrecker/towing service and the owner/operator if present.

- B. The towing service must respond in thirty (30) minutes or less. If the wrecker/towing service cannot make the allotted time; they will pass on the tow to the next list wrecker/towing service. The wrecker/towing service would then be put on top of the list for the next callout.
- C. A periodic review of the wrecker/towing service log shall be made. If such log reflects any issues concerning consistent late arrivals, the owner of the wrecker/towing service will be notified. Further actions of not responding in the allotted time could result in suspension and/or removal from the towing rotation list.

IX. Removal Procedures

- A. If after a call out of a towing service, the owner/operator of the vehicle wishes to have the vehicle removed by some other means, or someone shows up to remove the vehicle, the vehicle will still be hooked up for removal by the owner's request or next list wrecker/tow services. The wrecker/tow services will immediately remove the vehicle from the location and any further communication or transaction between wrecker/towing service and the owner/driver/designee of the vehicle will be done at a safe location, (i.e. parking lot).
- B. There are instances where a vehicle is drivable, however is stuck and needs assistance from a wrecker/towing service to be removed and put back onto the road. In these cases, whether it is large commercial vehicle, or passenger vehicle, the wrecker/towing service will hook up the vehicle for removal and two things will either occur:
 - 1. If the owner/operator of vehicle cannot make payment, the wrecker/towing service reserves the right to tow vehicle to impound, or
 - 2. If payment can be made, the wrecker/tow services will immediately remove the vehicle from the location and any further communication or transaction between wrecker/towing service and the owner/driver/designee of the vehicle will be done at a safe location, (i.e. parking lot), between the two parties. Notification to a supervisor of this situation must be made by the officer.
- C. Drivers of wrecker/towing services shall wear reflective/bright colored DOT approved shirts or vests for safety.
- D. Drivers of wrecker/towing services will clean up any debris from an accident.
- E. All amber lights will be employed on arrival, cleanup, removal, and exit to impound.

This SOP supersedes any SOP previously issued.

BY ORDER OF THE CHIEF OF POLICE:

Stacey L. Cotton
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Chief of Police