

Vehicle Towing and Release Policy

502.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy provides the procedures for towing a vehicle by or at the direction of the Colorado State University Police Department and under the authority of CRS § 42-4-1803.

502.2 RESPONSIBILITIES

The responsibilities of those employees storing or impounding a vehicle are as follows.

502.2.1 COMPLETION OF VEHICLE IMPOUND/STORAGE FORM

Department members requesting towing of a vehicle shall complete a vehicle impound/storage form that includes written authorization pursuant to CRS § 42-4-1803(1)(b) for the tow truck operator to possess the vehicle and a description of property within the vehicle. A copy is to be given to the tow truck operator and the original is to be submitted to the Records Division as soon as practical after the vehicle is stored.

Approved storage forms shall be promptly filed so that they are immediately available for release or for information should inquiries be made.

502.2.2 REMOVAL OF A VEHICLE DISABLED IN A TRAFFIC ACCIDENT

When a vehicle has been involved in a traffic accident and must be removed from the scene, the officer shall have the driver select a towing company, if reasonably possible, and shall relay the request for the specified towing company to Dispatch. When there is no preferred company requested, a company will be selected from the rotational list of towing companies in Dispatch.

If the owner is incapacitated or for any reason it is necessary for the Department to assume responsibility for a vehicle involved in an accident, the officer shall request the dispatcher to call a company selected from the rotational list of towing companies. The officer will then conduct an inventory and store the vehicle using a vehicle impound/storage form.

502.2.3 DRIVING A NON-UNIVERSITY VEHICLE

It may be necessary for personnel to move a vehicle a short distance to eliminate a hazard, prevent the obstruction of a fire hydrant or to comply with special event traffic patterns.

502.2.4 DISPATCHER'S RESPONSIBILITIES

Upon receiving a request for towing, the dispatcher shall promptly telephone the specified towing service. The officer shall be advised when the request has been made and the towing service has been dispatched.

When there is no preferred company requested, the dispatcher shall call the next firm in rotation from the list of approved towing companies and shall make appropriate entries on that form to ensure the next firm is called.

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502.2.5 RECORDS DIVISION RESPONSIBILITY

Approved vehicle impound/storage forms shall be promptly filed so that they are immediately available for release or review should inquiries be made.

Records Division personnel should promptly enter pertinent data from a completed vehicle impound/storage form into the Motor Vehicle Verification System to determine if the vehicle has been reported stolen (CRS § 42-4-1804). No later than 10 working days after a vehicle has been towed by this department, Records Division personnel shall report the towing and related information to the Department of Revenue, Motor Vehicle Division as required by CRS § 42-4-1804(1)(b).

The CSUPD Towing / Vehicle liaison shall make a good faith attempt to notify the owner or lien holder of abandoned vehicles within 10 working days after receipt of a vehicle impound/storage form pursuant to (CRS § 42-4-1804(4)(a); CRS § 42-4-1804(4)(b)). The notice shall inform the owner that he/she can request a hearing concerning the legality of the towing of the abandoned motor vehicle (CRS § 42-4-1804(4)(c)).

The Records Division should use the notice forms available from the Department of Revenue, Motor Vehicle Division when sending required notices to the owners or lien holders of stolen or abandoned vehicles (CRS § 42-4-1804(5)).

502.3 TOWING SERVICES

Colorado State University Police periodically selects one or more firms to act as official tow services and places those firms on the rotational call-out list. Those firms will be used in the following situations:

- (a) When it is necessary to safeguard a vehicle due to the inability of the owner or operator to take the required action.
- (b) When a vehicle is being held as evidence in connection with an investigation.
- (c) When it is otherwise necessary to store a motor vehicle. This would include situations involving the recovery of stolen or abandoned vehicles and the removal of vehicles obstructing traffic in violation of state or local regulations.

If more than one firm has been selected, they shall be placed on a rotation list.

502.4 TOWING AT ARREST SCENES

Whenever a person in charge or in control of a vehicle is arrested, it is the policy of this department to provide reasonable safekeeping by towing the arrestee's vehicle subject to the exceptions described below. However, a vehicle shall be towed whenever it is needed for the furtherance of an investigation or prosecution of the case, or when the community caretaker doctrine would reasonably suggest that the vehicle should be towed. For example, a vehicle shall be towed if it would present a traffic hazard or if it would be in jeopardy of theft or damage if left at the scene in a high-crime area.

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The following are examples of situations where consideration should be given to leaving a vehicle at the scene in lieu of towing, provided the vehicle can be lawfully parked and left in a reasonably secured and safe condition:

- Traffic-related warrant arrest
- Situations where the vehicle was not used to further the offense for which the occupant was arrested or is not subject to forfeiture proceedings
- Whenever the vehicle's registered owner is on scene or otherwise immediately available to drive the vehicle.
- Whenever the vehicle was lawfully parked in such a location as to avoid incurring fines or potential impound.

In such cases, the handling employee shall note in the report that the owner was informed that the Department will not be responsible for theft or damages.

502.5 VEHICLE INVENTORY

All property in a stored or impounded vehicle shall be inventoried and listed on the vehicle storage form. This includes the trunk and any compartments. Members conducting inventory searches should be as thorough and accurate as practical in preparing an itemized inventory. These inventory procedures are for the purpose of protecting an owner's property while the owner is in police custody, to provide for the safety of officers and the public, and to protect the Department against fraudulent claims of lost, stolen or damaged property.

If the apparent potential for damage to a locked container reasonably appears to outweigh the protection of the items inside, other options to consider regarding locked containers include, but are not limited to, obtaining access to the locked container from the owner, placing the locked container into safekeeping or obtaining a written waiver of responsibility for the contents of the locked container.

502.6 PRESERVATION OF EVIDENCE

An officer removing a vehicle pursuant to CRS § 42-4-1803, who has probable cause to believe that the vehicle or its contents constitute any evidence which tends to show that a criminal offense has been committed, or tends to show that a particular person has committed a criminal offense, should ensure that all legally required and reasonably necessary efforts to preserve the evidence, including but not limited to, safe storage, are taken until the evidence is released to the owner or otherwise disposed of according to law.

502.7 SECURITY OF VEHICLES AND PROPERTY

Unless it would cause an unreasonable delay in the completion of a vehicle impound/storage or create an issue of officer safety, an officer should make reasonable accommodations to permit a driver/owner to retrieve small items of value or personal need (e.g., cash, jewelry, cellular telephone, prescriptions) that are not considered evidence or contraband.

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If a search of a vehicle leaves the vehicle or any property contained therein vulnerable to unauthorized entry, theft or damage, personnel conducting the search shall take such steps as are reasonably necessary to secure and/or preserve the vehicle or property.