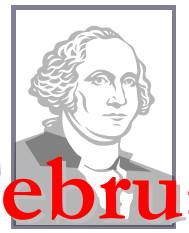
Tow Bulletin



February, 2009

Vol. 17, Issue 2 Marian Gaylord, Towing Coordinator, (503) 865-2489

PLEASE DISTRIBUTE THIS INFORMATION TO ALL TOW CONTRACT EMPLOYEES

Hail to the Chief(s)... Monday, February 16th will be observed as the Presidents' Day Holiday in honor of Abraham Lincoln's and George Washington's birthdays. As usual, gate fees will apply all day – treat it like a Saturday or Sunday. ***I'll bet they didn't get a day off for their birthdays!...***

Time Flies Like an Arrow~ *fruit-flies like a banana!*... Just a little silliness to let you know that five years have passed since the beginning of the current Agreement For Central Dispatching Of Towing Services. This means that we will need to put out an application and award a new Tow Desk contract in time to start in July! The timeline approved by the Tow Board is:

February – draft of contract changes and application materials to the Board.

March – Board approval of application form and Contract – 3/18 Tow Board meeting.
- Applications available 3/23

April – Application submission deadline – 4/20. Facility and equipment inspections – 4/27-5/11

May – review application and inspection results. Board approval of Dispatch Contractor – 5/20 Tow Board meeting.

After the Board approves a Contractor, the next step is approval by City Council. ***New contract starts at midnight July 1, 2009. . .***

A Little Something Extra … Every now and then, a vehicle owner will ask a Tow Contractor for some extra service that is not part of their contract duties ~ charging a battery, fixing a flat tire, re-towing to their home or a shop, etc. These little extras are not included in the terms of the Tow Contract and therefore should not appear on the Contract Invoice. If you plan to charge for such a service, you will need to make sure the citizen knows what the fee will be *before* you do the work and it should be itemized on your commercial - or "shop"- invoice. Notes should be made on both the commercial and contract invoices making reference to the other invoice. The two copies should be attached to make it easier to understand the whole billing. ***This should make it easier for citizens and auditors to understand. . .***

Just no "Accounting" for it . . . The Good News: The City's new accounting system is supposed to provide much more accountability than the old one; The Bad News: Procedural changes, new work assignments and the endless "learning curve" have made for confusion, frustration and, worst of all, late payments. I am working with the good folks who pay bills for City Fleet, Parking Enforcement, the Bureau of Maintenance and PPB, to help them better understand the needs of the tow

contractors and the terms of the contract. I am happy to say that I have heard that the checks are beginning to trickle in. I appreciate how patient the towers have been and I sincerely hope that everyone will be caught up very soon.

In the meantime, a couple of tips for the towers to help speed up payment:

- **Send your bills to the right place-** Every January we publish a list of contact names, phone numbers, emails, faxes and addresses to help you avoid delays caused by invoices going to the wrong bill payers.
- **Fill out the invoices *accurately* and *completely*-** Missing information on the invoice is an invitation to confusion about who should pay. Any unusual fees must be explained.
- **Check the contract rates before writing up an invoice-** This is important, especially if it's a type of tow that you don't do often. Remember: the new "agency" rates don't start until July 1st.
- **Second notice, third notice, etc.-** If you want to send a reminder to an agency about an unpaid bill, *don't* just send another copy of the previous one. This is very difficult to track and may hold up any payment. If you have a question, send an email to the Towing Coordinator with information to identify the specific unpaid tow and I'll try to help you find out.

Incorrect invoices are currently holding up some payments. You may receive requests for corrected invoices. Remember: The City has 60 days to pay, from the date that they receive a correct bill. ***If you get an invoice back that you think is correct, send a copy to me with your reasons why you billed it as you did. . .***

Such a Deal! . . . An *accurate* appraisal of a vehicle's value is the mandatory first step in asserting a valid possessory lien. State law also requires that such appraisals be performed "by a person who holds a certificate issued under ORS 819.230…" This means that each person who does appraisals must be certified in their own right. No one is allowed to do appraisals under the authority of another person's certification.

The vehicle must have been in storage for a full 7 days before you are allowed to recover the actual lien expenses.

And remember… You may not charge more than $40.00 for lien processing unless you have made your prior written request, with documentation of the actual expenses incurred, and have received permission from the Towing Coordinator. ***Lien fees of more than $40 without TC approval will have to be refunded to the citizen and penalties may be applied. . .***

There's a Reason They're Called *Standard* Invoices . . . When re-printing invoice forms for Contract tows, it may be tempting to re-arrange the boxes or change wording. However, **do not make any change** to this standard form without first checking with the Towing Coordinator. The reason for standardizing the information and locations of information on the invoice is to make it easier to see that it is correctly filled out and to facilitate auditing. ***Use of a non-standard invoice on a Contract tow may be***

grounds for invalidation of the tow and a full refund of fees. . .

Monthly Employee and Equipment Updates . . . Who is responsible for updating your Employee and Equipment reports each month? Is it your company owner? Is it a manager? Is it an office staff person? *Regardless* - accuracy in reporting staff or equipment changes is very important**.** Failure to update these reports accurately and submit them timely, is a contract violation!

Do the job right:

- **Check *everything* on the report** – this means, City plates matching up to the correct DMV plate, complete and correct VINs, spelling of employee names, birthdates, driver numbers, hire and termination dates, *and* workshop and driver certifications!
- **Sign the report –** if your signature is not legible – *you know who you are out there* – be sure to **print** your name under your signature so we can read it. And don't forget to list your job title. Add the date – month, day and year - that you are submitting the report.
- **Don't forget to list all new employees –** with *accurate* dates, even if they are hired and gone within a single month. Every employee (especially drivers) who works for your company, even for one day, *must* be reported on the New Hire form and sent to the Towing Coordinator with the required documents.
- **If a truck on your list shows "temp" instead of a DMV plate –** get the permanent plates and add the information on your monthly report. Towers may not operate indefinitely with temporary registration on any equipment.
- **If you change DMV plates on a truck –** *correct the information on the report!*

Lack of reliability in towers' monthly reports is the reason for several unpopular changes in the new contract. . .

January Response Times . . . Out of 2123 tow requests:

21 to 30 minutes – 120 tows (down 3 from December)
31 + minutes – 58 tows (up from 52)
4 Failures to Respond (down from 9)

Less than 5%:

21st Century D4	Safeguard
A&B D8	Sam's
A&B D2	Security
A&B D7	Sergeants D3
Loop Hiway	Sergeants D8
Oregon	Speeds D8
Retriever	

5 to 9.9% :

21st Century D7	Northwestern
Beaver	United Service Alliance

10% or more

21st Century D5	Handy Andy's
Buck's	Newhouse D4
City	Newhouse D5
Crown	Newhouse D8
Gerlock	Speed's D5

100% Response . . .

21st Century D4 85 requests
21st Century D5 58 requests
21st Century D7 96 requests
Beaver 59 requests

City 48 requests
Gerlock 10 requests
Newhouse D5 48 requests
Safeguard 94 requests
Sam's 85 requests
Security 165 requests
Sergeant's D3 54 requests
Sergeant's D8 72 requests

In addition, the following companies passed only 1 tow in January:

Loop Hiway 74 requests
Newhouse D4 77 requests

The overall pass percentage for January was 2.87%...

Next Contract Workshop . . .

1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Thursday, February 28, 2008
Room 600, Rivers Conf room
111 SW Columbia Street

Don't wait until the last minute. Register by Tuesday, February 26th. Class starts by 1:35 so be on time! ***Late-comers may be turned away…***

…mg