



Vehicle Towing and Booting

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This *issue brief* provides an overview of Colorado laws and regulations related to motor vehicle towing and immobilization with the use of boots.

Definitions

Booting. A parking boot, also known as a wheel clamp, wheel boot, or Denver Boot™, immobilizes a motor vehicle, usually until a fee, unpaid parking tickets, or other outstanding citations are paid.

Consensual towing. Consensual tows occur when a towing carrier is requested to perform a tow by the owner, authorized operator, or authorized agent of a motor vehicle. An example of a consensual tow is when a motor vehicle breaks down and a towing carrier is called to tow the vehicle to a repair shop.

Nonconsensual towing. Nonconsensual tows occur when a towing carrier is directed to perform a tow by a law enforcement officer or upon authorization of the property owner. Typically, nonconsensual tows occur due to illegal parking.

Regulation

The Public Utilities Commission (PUC) is responsible for the oversight of towing carriers and vehicle booting companies operating within the state. Additionally, a 14-member Towing Task Force provides recommendations and advice to the PUC and legislature on various aspects related to the regulation of towing carriers.

Colorado law requires all towing carriers and vehicle booting companies to obtain a permit and meet certain financial responsibility and owner requirements.¹

Signage and Notice Requirements

In order for a vehicle to be towed from a private parking lot in a nonconsensual tow or have a parking boot applied, notice of applicable parking regulations must be provided at the time the vehicle was parked, along with notice that those in violation are subject to being towed or booted at the owner's expense. In order to meet this notice requirement, a permanent sign must be conspicuously posted near each entrance to the parking lot and on lampposts throughout the parking lot. These signs must meet certain minimum requirements related to readability and content. Booting companies are also required to place a warning sign on the driver-side window of a vehicle that has been booted indicating that operating the vehicle may cause damage.²

Towing and Booting Charges

PUC regulations limit the charges towing carriers and vehicle booting companies may impose.

Consensual towing charges. Before a consensual tow can occur, the towing carrier must disclose all rates and charges to be assessed for the tow, including the estimated charges for mileage and storage and any extra charges necessary.³

¹Sections 40-10.1-401, *et seq.*, and 40-10.1-801, C.R.S.
²4 CCR 723-6, Rules 6513 and 6816.

³4 CCR 723-6, Rule 6510.

Nonconsensual towing charges. PUC regulations allow towing carriers to impose the following types of charges for nonconsensual tows:

- base rate for the tow;
- mileage charge, including a fuel surcharge;
- vehicle storage charge; and
- storage release charge for the release outside of the towing carrier’s business hours.

Table 1 lists the maximum amount of the various charges, as set by the PUC. Nonconsensual tows that are ordered by law enforcement are subject to different rates set by the PUC.⁴

Booting charges. Vehicle booting companies may charge up to \$160 for the removal of a parking boot and must immediately remove the boot once payment is received. No more than one boot may be applied to a vehicle at any given time.⁵

Drop charges. If a motor vehicle owner, authorized operator, or authorized agent appears in person while the vehicle is about to be towed or booted, or is in the process of being towed or booted, the motor vehicle owner must be given the opportunity to pay the drop charge to halt the tow or booting. The PUC limits the drop charge to \$82 for towing for most passenger vehicles and \$25 for most booting.⁶

Forms of payment. PUC rules require that all towing carriers and vehicle booting companies accept cash or a major credit card as payment for any charges.⁷

Release Requirements

Nonconsensual tows. Towing carriers are required to provide access to a motor vehicle that has been towed upon demand during the towing carrier’s business hours or within one-hour notice within the first 24 hours of storage during times outside of those business hours.

Towing carriers must also immediately relinquish prescription medicines, medical equipment or devices, child restraint systems, credit cards and cash, identification, and cell phones without requiring payment and without additional charge within the above hours.⁸

Booting. Vehicle booting companies are required to be available to remove a boot within 90 minutes during the company’s normal business hours, or within 120 minutes notice outside of those hours.

**Table 1
Nonconsensual Towing Rate Limits**

Item	Limit
Base rate	\$211.11 for most passenger vehicles; \$242.78 - \$369.46 for larger vehicles, depending on weight.
Mileage charge	\$3.80 per mile for each mile that the motor vehicle is towed, up to 12 miles for tows within 10 miles of either side of I-25, and up to 16.5 miles for areas that lie farther than 10 miles from I-25.
Fuel surcharge	When the price per gallon of diesel fuel exceeds a base rate of \$2.60, an additional fuel surcharge may be added. The surcharge is set by the PUC monthly.
Storage charge	\$40.56 per 24-hour period for most passenger vehicles; \$50.03 for larger vehicles; or \$1.50 per foot according to the motor vehicle’s length.
After hours release charge	\$89.24

Source: <https://puc.colorado.gov/towing>.

⁴ CCR 723-6, Rule 6511.

⁵ CCR 723-6, Rules 6816 and 6817.

⁶ CCR 723-6, Rules 6511 (a) and 6817.

⁷ CCR 723-6, Rules 6512 and 6818.

⁸ CCR 723-6, Rule 6512.