



Ohio Revised Code

Section 4513.601 Private tow-away zones.

Effective: April 6, 2017

Legislation: House Bill 341 - 131st General Assembly

(A) The owner of a private property may establish a private tow-away zone, but may do so only if all of the following conditions are satisfied:

(1) The owner of the private property posts on the property a sign, that is at least eighteen inches by twenty-four inches in size, that is visible from all entrances to the property, and that includes all of the following information:

(a) A statement that the property is a tow-away zone;

(b) A description of persons authorized to park on the property. If the property is a residential property, the owner of the private property may include on the sign a statement that only tenants and guests may park in the private tow-away zone, subject to the terms of the property owner. If the property is a commercial property, the owner of the private property may include on the sign a statement that only customers may park in the private tow-away zone. In all cases, if it is not apparent which persons may park in the private tow-away zone, the owner of the private property shall include on the sign the address of the property on which the private tow-away zone is located or the name of the business that is located on the property designated as a private tow-away zone.

(c) If the private tow-away zone is not enforceable at all times, the times during which the parking restrictions are enforced;

(d) The telephone number and the address of the place from which a towed vehicle may be recovered at any time during the day or night;

(e) A statement that the failure to recover a towed vehicle may result in the loss of title to the vehicle as provided in division (B) of section 4505.101 of the Revised Code.

In order to comply with the requirements of division (A)(1) of this section, the owner of a private



property may modify an existing sign by affixing to the existing sign stickers or an addendum in lieu of replacing the sign.

(2) A towing service ensures that a vehicle towed under this section is taken to a location from which it may be recovered that complies with all of the following:

(a) It is located within twenty-five linear miles of the location of the private tow-away zone, unless it is not practicable to take the vehicle to a place of storage within twenty-five linear miles.

(b) It is well-lighted.

(c) It is on or within a reasonable distance of a regularly scheduled route of one or more modes of public transportation, if any public transportation is available in the municipal corporation or township in which the private tow-away zone is located.

(B)(1) If a vehicle is parked on private property that is established as a private tow-away zone in accordance with division (A) of this section, without the consent of the owner of the private property or in violation of any posted parking condition or regulation, the owner of the private property may cause the removal of the vehicle by a towing service. The towing service shall remove the vehicle in accordance with this section. The vehicle owner and the operator of the vehicle are considered to have consented to the removal and storage of the vehicle, to the payment of the applicable fees established by the public utilities commission in rules adopted under section 4921.25 of the Revised Code, and to the right of a towing service to obtain title to the vehicle if it remains unclaimed as provided in section 4505.101 of the Revised Code. The owner or lienholder of a vehicle that has been removed under this section, subject to division (C) of this section, may recover the vehicle in accordance with division (G) of this section.

(2) If a municipal corporation requires tow trucks and tow truck operators to be licensed, no owner of a private property located within the municipal corporation shall cause the removal and storage of any vehicle pursuant to division (B) of this section by an unlicensed tow truck or unlicensed tow truck operator.

(3) No towing service shall remove a vehicle from a private tow-away zone except pursuant to a



written contract for the removal of vehicles entered into with the owner of the private property on which the private tow-away zone is located.

(C) If the owner or operator of a vehicle that is being removed under authority of division (B) of this section arrives after the vehicle has been prepared for removal, but prior to its actual removal from the property, the towing service shall give the vehicle owner or operator oral or written notification at the time of such arrival that the vehicle owner or operator may pay a fee of not more than one-half of the fee for the removal of the vehicle established by the public utilities commission in rules adopted under section 4921.25 of the Revised Code in order to obtain release of the vehicle. That fee may be paid by use of a major credit card unless the towing service uses a mobile credit card processor and mobile service is not available at the time of the transaction. Upon payment of that fee, the towing service shall give the vehicle owner or operator a receipt showing both the full amount normally assessed and the actual amount received and shall release the vehicle to the owner or operator. Upon its release, the owner or operator immediately shall move the vehicle so that the vehicle is not parked on the private property established as a private tow-away zone without the consent of the owner of the private property or in violation of any posted parking condition or regulation.

(D)(1) Prior to towing a vehicle under division (B) of this section, a towing service shall make all reasonable efforts to take as many photographs as necessary to evidence that the vehicle is clearly parked on private property in violation of a private tow-away zone established under division (A) of this section.

The towing service shall record the time and date of the photographs taken under this section. The towing service shall retain the photographs and the record of the time and date, in electronic or printed form, for at least thirty days after the date on which the vehicle is recovered by the owner or lienholder or at least two years after the date on which the vehicle was towed, whichever is earlier.

(2) A towing service shall deliver a vehicle towed under division (B) of this section to the location from which it may be recovered not more than two hours after the time it was removed from the private tow-away zone, unless the towing service is unable to deliver the motor vehicle within two hours due to an uncontrollable force, natural disaster, or other event that is not within the power of the towing service.



(E)(1) If an owner of a private property that is established as a private tow-away zone in accordance with division (A) of this section causes the removal of a vehicle from that property by a towing service under division (B) of this section, the towing service, within two hours of removing the vehicle, shall provide notice to the sheriff of the county or the police department of the municipal corporation, township, or township or joint police district in which the property is located concerning all of the following:

- (a) The vehicle's license number, make, model, and color;
- (b) The location from which the vehicle was removed;
- (c) The date and time the vehicle was removed;
- (d) The telephone number of the person from whom the vehicle may be recovered;
- (e) The address of the place from which the vehicle may be recovered.

(2) Each county sheriff and each chief of police of a municipal corporation, township, or township or joint police district shall maintain a record of any vehicle removed from private property in the sheriff's or chief's jurisdiction that is established as a private tow-away zone of which the sheriff or chief has received notice under this section. The record shall include all information submitted by the towing service. The sheriff or chief shall provide any information in the record that pertains to a particular vehicle to a person who, either in person or pursuant to a telephone call, identifies self as the owner, operator, or lienholder of the vehicle and requests information pertaining to the vehicle.

(F)(1) When a vehicle is removed from private property in accordance with this section, within three business days of the removal, the towing service or storage facility from which the vehicle may be recovered shall cause a search to be made of the records of the bureau of motor vehicles to ascertain the identity of the owner and any lienholder of the motor vehicle. The registrar of motor vehicles shall ensure that such information is provided in a timely manner. Subject to division (F)(4) of this section, the towing service or storage facility shall send notice to the vehicle owner and any known lienholder as follows:



(a) Within five business days after the registrar of motor vehicles provides the identity of the owner and any lienholder of the motor vehicle, if the vehicle remains unclaimed, to the owner's and lienholder's last known address by certified or express mail with return receipt requested or by a commercial carrier service utilizing any form of delivery requiring a signed receipt;

(b) If the vehicle remains unclaimed thirty days after the first notice is sent, in the manner required under division (F)(1)(a) of this section;

(c) If the vehicle remains unclaimed forty-five days after the first notice is sent, in the manner required under division (F)(1)(a) of this section.

(2) Sixty days after any notice sent pursuant to division (F)(1) of this section is received, as evidenced by a receipt signed by any person, or the towing service or storage facility has been notified that delivery was not possible, the towing service or storage facility, if authorized under division (B) of section 4505.101 of the Revised Code, may initiate the process for obtaining a certificate of title to the motor vehicle as provided in that section.

(3) A towing service or storage facility that does not receive a signed receipt of notice, or a notification that delivery was not possible, shall not obtain, and shall not attempt to obtain, a certificate of title to the motor vehicle under division (B) of section 4505.101 of the Revised Code.

(4) With respect to a vehicle concerning which a towing service or storage facility is not eligible to obtain title under section 4505.101 of the Revised Code, the towing service or storage facility need only comply with the initial notice required under division (F)(1)(a) of this section.

(G)(1) The owner or lienholder of a vehicle that is removed under division (B) of this section may reclaim it upon both of the following:

(a) Presentation of proof of ownership, which may be evidenced by a certificate of title to the vehicle, a certificate of registration for the motor vehicle, or a lease agreement;

(b) Payment of the following fees:



(i) All applicable fees established by the public utilities commission in rules adopted under section 4921.25 of the Revised Code, except that the lienholder of a vehicle may retrieve the vehicle without paying any storage fee for the period of time that the vehicle was in the possession of the towing service or storage facility prior to the date the lienholder received the notice sent under division (F)(1)(a) of this section;

(ii) If notice has been sent to the owner and lienholder as described in division (F) of this section, a processing fee of twenty-five dollars.

(2) A towing service or storage facility in possession of a vehicle that is removed under authority of division (B) of this section shall show the vehicle owner, operator, or lienholder who contests the removal of the vehicle all photographs taken under division (D) of this section. Upon request, the towing service or storage facility shall provide a copy of all photographs in the medium in which the photographs are stored, whether paper, electronic, or otherwise.

(3) When the owner of a vehicle towed under this section retrieves the vehicle, the towing service or storage facility in possession of the vehicle shall give the owner written notice that if the owner disputes that the motor vehicle was lawfully towed, the owner may be able to file a civil action under section 4513.611 of the Revised Code.

(4) Upon presentation of proof of ownership, which may be evidenced by a certificate of title to the vehicle, a certificate of registration for the motor vehicle, or a lease agreement, the owner of a vehicle that is removed under authority of division (B) of this section may retrieve any personal items from the vehicle without retrieving the vehicle and without paying any fee. The owner of the vehicle shall not retrieve any personal items from a vehicle if it would endanger the safety of the owner, unless the owner agrees to sign a waiver of liability. For purposes of division (G)(4) of this section, "personal items" do not include any items that are attached to the vehicle.

(H) No person shall remove, or cause the removal of, any vehicle from private property that is established as a private tow-away zone under this section or store such a vehicle other than in accordance with this section, or otherwise fail to comply with any applicable requirement of this section.



(I) This section does not affect or limit the operation of section 4513.60 or sections 4513.61 to 4613.65 of the Revised Code as they relate to property other than private property that is established as a private tow-away zone under division (A) of this section.

(J) Whoever violates division (H) of this section is guilty of a minor misdemeanor.

(K) As used in this section, "owner of a private property" or "owner of the private property" includes, with respect to a private property, any of the following:

(1) Any person who holds title to the property;

(2) Any person who is a lessee or sublessee with respect to a lease or sublease agreement for the property;

(3) A person who is authorized to manage the property;

(4) A duly authorized agent of any person listed in divisions (K)(1) to (3) of this section.