

I got towed! What do I do next?

If your vehicle was towed from a private parking facility, there should be a sign with a phone number you can call to find out where your vehicle was taken. The number must be answered 24 hours a day.

Claiming or accessing your vehicle after you've been towed

- If the vehicle storage facility (VSF) accepts vehicles 24 hours a day, you have the right to claim or get access to your vehicle 24 hours a day and within one hour of the vehicle being towed.
- If the VSF does not accept vehicles 24 hours a day, you have the right to claim or get access to your vehicle between 8 a.m. and midnight Monday through Saturday and 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Sundays, except for nationally recognized holidays. VSFs that do not accept vehicles 24 hours a day do not have to release a vehicle after midnight.

It's important to remember that you DO NOT have the right to:

- Remove or dismantle any part attached to the vehicle while it is at the VSF.
- Retrieve your vehicle from the VSF without paying the towing, storage or other allowed fees.
- Retrieve your vehicle from the VSF without demonstrating that you are the owner or authorized user of the vehicle.
- Obtain your vehicle after it has been removed from the parking facility but before it has been placed in a VSF.

The VSF will require several things before they will release your vehicle to you, so gather those items **before** you go.

What to take to the VSF

You'll need to pay all fees for towing and storage at the VSF before they will release your vehicle. What you'll need to take to the VSF:

- Payment for the tow and storage fees (they will accept cash, debit card or credit card);
- a valid state or federally-issued photo ID card; and
- one document that shows ownership or possession of the car. These documents include:
 - an insurance card showing that you are a named insured for the vehicle;
 - the certificate of title to the vehicle showing your name as the owner;
 - a notarized power-of-attorney signed by the vehicle owner;
 - a tax collector's receipt and a vehicle registration renewal card with your matching information;
 - a current automobile lease or rental agreement signed by the operator of the vehicle; or,
 - the TDLR form "Removal and/or Inspection of a Motor Vehicle at a VSF" (<https://www.tdlr.texas.gov/towing/forms/VSF013%20-%20Personal%20Vehicle%20Owner%20Removal%20and-or%20Inspection%20form.pdf>). The VSF also must make this form available to you.

Once you've gathered the documentation you'll need to claim the vehicle, you can head to the VSF to pay the fees and claim your vehicle. While your vehicle is stored at the VSF, they must make reasonable efforts for safely storing your vehicle, such as locking doors, rolling up windows, and closing doors, hatchbacks, sunroofs, trunks, hoods, or convertible tops. These actions are included in the storage fee.

Note: if the vehicle ownership documents are in the vehicle that was towed, you have the right to get into the vehicle to retrieve those without paying a fee. Once you can demonstrate ownership of the vehicle, or the right to possess the vehicle, you can access the vehicle to recover personal property without paying a fee.

You may be thinking it's too big a hassle retrieving your vehicle. Be aware there are consequences to that: If you do not claim your Texas-registered vehicle, it could be sold at a public sale anywhere from 20 to 45 days after you have been notified that the vehicle is stored at the VSF.

Your rights if you've been towed

If you think your vehicle should not have been towed, or if you were charged more than the allowed fee, you can request a tow hearing at any Justice of the Peace court in the county where your vehicle was towed. You can look up which Justice of the Peace court is in your county here: <http://card.txcourts.gov/DirectorySearch.aspx>.

You must request a court hearing before the 14th day after the vehicle was removed and placed in a VSF. The court can charge you a fee for the hearing, which must be held within 21 calendar days of the court receiving your request.

Your tow hearing request must contain this information:

- your name, address, and telephone number of the owner or operator of the vehicle;
- where the vehicle was towed from;
- the date your vehicle was towed;
- the name, address, and telephone number of the person or law enforcement agency that authorized the tow;
- the name, address, and telephone number of the vehicle storage facility where your vehicle was towed;
- the name, address, and telephone number of the towing company that towed the vehicle;
- a copy of any receipt or notification that you received from the towing company or the VSF; and
- one or more photographs that show where the vehicle was towed from, plus the text of any sign posted at the parking facility that states that parking is restricted. (If there wasn't a sign restricting parking posted at the parking facility, then you need to include a note saying that.)

In addition to requesting a court hearing, you can also file a complaint online with TDLR (<https://www.tdlr.texas.gov/Complaints/>). Be sure to request the JP court hearing first, since there's a time issue.

Please note that TDLR does not have jurisdiction over the storage of repossessed vehicles.

Please remember that this document is a summary of the laws and administrative rules and is not a complete description of your rights or the requirements for license holders.

TOWING CONSUMER PROTECTION