



DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

MEMORANDUM

TO: Karen Yatchum, Director, Human Services

THROUGH: Tim Burns, Director of Programs, Human Services

FROM: Doug Templeton, Consumer Protection Chief Investigator

SUBJECT: Three-year Towing Review Update

DATE: March 29, 2023

Pinellas County adopted a towing ordinance in 2000 to establish local regulations for the conduct of towing along with setting of maximum fees for nonconsensual and trespass towing to protect consumers. Adjustments were made to the ordinance in 2016 and 2019 to aid with clarifying consumer protections, and in December of 2019, Consumer Protection brought recommendations forward to the Board of County Commissioners to update towing fees for a competitive marketplace with ongoing review planned at three-year intervals starting in 2022.

Consumer Protection has engaged representatives of the local towing industry through a meeting with the *Professional Wreckers of Florida, Inc.* (PWOFF) and conducting an in-person feedback session with local towing operators. These were informative discussions that helped to highlight current industry trends, areas for review, and fee recommendations. Staff attended a recent Pinellas Police Standards Council meeting to solicit feedback regarding towing and no concerns were reported.

Industry representatives expressed that they have seen significant increases in staffing and operational costs in recent years and indicated growing difficulties in maintaining competitive operations without fee increases. Specifically, the group highlighted significant increases in costs for vehicle acquisition, maintenance, insurance, and fuel costs, as well as employee retention challenges and needed pay increases. In addition to fees and costs, several minor language clarifications were discussed for consideration and the towing operators expressed continued concerns about unscrupulous operators, which may lend itself to possible future exploration of a registration process.

Independent of the above meetings, Consumer Protection has updated its assessment of towing rates across comparison counties in Florida, see Attachment 1. Our review found that many counties have proceeded with review and adjustment of allowable fees in response to recent economic pressures. Based on feedback and our review of other County towing fee rates around the state, Consumer Protection is preparing recommendations to bring forward for fee

adjustments and ordinance updates to help maintain a healthy and competitive environment for the towing industry while maintaining consumer protections.

Example fee increase scenarios utilizing PWOFF recommendations:

The examples below show two towing scenarios for Class A vehicles under current and PWOFF-proposed rates. Assuming a maximum 10 mile tow, in scenario 1, the cost would increase by \$32 or 19%. Under scenario 2, with 1 day of storage included, the increase would be \$37, or 19.5%.

Scenario 1:

Current Rates:

Tow, 10 mile max, no storage. $\$125 + \$40 = \$165$

PWOFF Recommended Rates:

Tow, 10 mile max, no storage. $\$147 + \$50 = \$197$

Scenario 2:

Current Rates:

Two, 10 mile max, 1 day storage. $\$125 + \$40 \text{ distance} + \$25 = \190

PWOFF Recommended Rates:

Tow, 10 mile max, 1 day storage. $\$147 + \$50 \text{ distance} + \$30 = \227

See Attachment 2 for detailed percentage increases.

Ordinance updates to be considered:

- Update language to provide for adjusted fees
- Require start/end dates for written agreements between property owners and tow operators
- Update Consumer Protection contact information
- Update record keeping requirements by tow operators (maintain records on-site)
- Update language to align with definitions
- Update language on towing of large or hitched vehicles (boat, tractor, heavy equipment is considered one vehicle when towing)
- Update language to allow for up to 4% fee assessment for payment being made by debit card or credit card.

ATTACHMENT #1

PINELLAS AND SURROUNDING COUNTIES

PWOF proposed Fees / Hillsborough County - anticipated proposed rates go to BCC in April 2023

COUNTY	Trespass Tow Fee	Trespass Tow Fee Per Mile	Nonconsensual Tow Fee	Nonconsensual Fee Per Mile	Daily Storage Fee Amount	Labor (beyond initial 30 min, per 15 min)	Admin/Lien Fees	Cover/Tarp Fee	Last Update to Fees	
PINELLAS	(nonconsensual only)									
Class A Vehicles	\$125.00 \$147.00	\$4.00 \$5.00	\$130.00 \$153.00	\$4.00 \$5.00	\$25.00 \$30.00	\$25.00 (\$100/hr) \$30.00 (\$120/hr)	\$40-admin/\$35-lien (\$75 total) \$60-admin/\$40-lien (\$100 total)	\$20.00 \$35.00	2019	
Class B Vehicles	\$225.00 \$265.00	\$5.00 \$6.00	\$230.00 \$270.00	\$5.00 \$6.00	\$35.00 \$40.00	\$50.00 (\$200/hr) \$60.00 (\$240/hr)				
Class C Vehicles	\$340.00 \$400.00	\$6.00 \$7.00	\$350.00 \$415.00	\$6.00 \$7.00	\$60.00 \$70.00	\$75.00 (\$300/hr) \$90.00 (\$360/hr)				
Class D Vehicles	\$440.00 \$520.00	\$6.00 \$7.00	\$450.00 \$530.00	\$6.00 \$7.00	\$60.00 \$70.00	\$100.00 (\$400/hr) \$120.00 (\$480/hr)				
HILLSBOROUGH	(nonconsensual only)									
Light-Duty Towing	\$125.00 160.00	\$5.00 \$6.00	\$125.00 \$160.00	\$5.00 \$6.00	\$25.00 \$35.00	\$20.00 (\$80/hr) \$30.00 (\$120/hr)	\$75.00 \$100.00	\$15.00 \$20.00	Proposed rates to BCC in April 2023 2022 (No Change) 2017 (\$125)	
Medium-Duty Towing	\$160.00 \$200.00	\$5.00 \$7.00	\$160.00 \$200.00	\$5.00 \$6.00	\$35.00 \$45.00	\$31.25 (\$125/hr) \$35.00 (140/hr)				
Medium/Heavy-Duty	\$350.00 \$475.00	\$6.00 \$8.00	\$350.00 \$475.00	\$6.00 \$475.00	\$55.00 \$75.00	\$50.00 (\$200/hr) \$55.00 (\$220/hr)				
PASCO										
Class A Wrecker Service	\$150.00	\$5.00	\$150.00	\$5.00	\$35.00	\$50 (1hr min, 1/4 increments thereafter)	\$75.00 Per Vehicle	\$15.00	2022 (\$150) 2019 (\$115) 2009 (\$105)	
Class B Wrecker Service	\$170.00	\$5.00	\$170.00	\$5.00	\$35.00	\$50 (1hr min, 1/4 increments thereafter)				
Class C Wrecker Service	\$350.00	\$6.00	\$350.00	\$6.00	\$35.00	\$50 (1hr min, 1/4 increments thereafter)				

COUNTY	Trespass Tow Fee	Trespass Tow Fee Per Mile	Nonconsensual Tow Fee	Nonconsensual Fee Per Mile	Daily Storage Fee Amount	Labor (beyond initial 30 min, per 15 min)	Admin/Lien Fees	Cover/Tarp Fee	Last Update to Fees
POLK	(nonconsensual only)								
Class A Vehicles	\$125.00	none	\$150.00	\$6.00	\$30.00	\$25.00 (\$100/hr)	\$45.00 + \$10 per cert letter (\$75 max)	\$25.00	2022 (No Change, fuel charge added) June 2019 (NC only) 2013 \$125
Class B Vehicles	\$250.00	none	\$250.00	\$7.00	\$45.00	\$45.00 (\$180/hr)			
Class C Vehicles	\$400.00	none	\$450.00	\$9.00	\$60.00	\$85.00 (\$340/hr)			
Class D Vehicles	\$500.00	none	\$600.00	\$9.00	\$60.00	\$90.00 (\$360/hr)			
SARASOTA									
Class A Vehicles	\$125.00	n/a	\$125.00	n/a	Inside \$35.00 Outside \$25.00	\$100.00	\$40.00	n/a	2007
Class B Vehicles	\$175.00	n/a	\$175.00	n/a	Inside \$35.00 Outside \$25.00	\$150.00	\$40.00	n/a	
Class C Vehicles	\$300.00	n/a	\$300.00	n/a	Inside \$35.00 Outside \$25.00	\$200.00	\$40.00	n/a	
Class D Vehicles	\$400.00	n/a	\$400.00	n/a	Inside \$35.00 Outside \$25.00	\$200.00	\$40.00	n/a	
MANATEE									
Class A	\$125.00	\$4.00	\$125.00	\$4.00	\$25.00	\$25.00 (\$100/hr)		\$25 to cover or protect vehicle contents	2022 (No Change) Not in last 16 years
Class B	\$150.00	\$4.00	\$150.00	\$4.00	\$30.00	\$25.00 (\$100/hr)			
Class C	\$200.00	\$5.00	\$200.00	\$5.00	\$50.00	\$37.50 (\$150/hr)			

CENTRAL / EAST COAST COUNTIES

COUNTY	Trespass Tow Fee	Trespass Tow Fee Per Mile	Nonconsensual Tow Fee	Nonconsensual Fee Per Mile	Daily Storage Fee Amount	Labor (beyond initial 30 min, per 15 min)	Admin/Lien Fees	Cover/Tarp Fee	Last Update to Fees
BROWARD									
Class A Vehicle	\$160.00	none	\$160.00	none	\$26.35	none	\$50.00	n/a	2022 (\$160) FY17, 18, 19 (CPI)
Class B Vehicle	\$192.05	none	\$192.05	none	\$47.19	\$192.05			
Class C Vehicle	\$329.23	none	\$329.23	none	\$54.87	\$329.23			
Class D Vehicle	\$438.99	none	\$438.99	none	\$54.87	\$109.74			
MIAMI-DADE	(nonconsensual only)								
Class A Vehicle	\$145.00	none	\$145.00	\$3.91 after 5 miles	\$33.90 indoor \$27.60 outdoor	none	\$38.20	n/a	2022 2003 (\$101)
Class B Vehicle	\$208.65	\$3.50 after 5 miles	\$215.00	\$4.53 after 5 miles	\$33.90 indoor \$27.60 outdoor	\$41.25			
Class C Vehicle	\$296.50	\$4.50 after 5 miles	\$305.40	\$6.08 after 5 miles	\$33.90 indoor \$27.60 outdoor	\$58.75			
Class D Vehicle	\$377.50	\$5.50 after 5 miles	\$389.00	\$7.21 after 5 miles	\$33.90 indoor \$27.60 outdoor	\$75.00			
ORANGE	(nonconsensual only)								
Class A Vehicle	\$125.00	none	\$125.00	\$3.00	\$25.00	\$31.25 (\$125/hr)	\$45.00 + actual fees imposed by FL	\$15.00	2022 (No Change) 2014 (No Change)
Class B Vehicle	\$250.00	none	\$250.00	\$4.00	\$35.00	\$62.50 (\$250/hr)			
Class C Vehicle	\$375.00	none	\$375.00	\$5.00	\$60.00	\$93.75 (\$375/hr)			
Class D Vehicle	\$500.00	none	\$500.00	\$6.00	\$60.00	\$125.00 (\$500/hr)			
PALM BEACH	(nonconsensual only)								
Class A Vehicle	\$138.00	none	\$138.00	none	\$28.00	\$41.75 (\$167/hr)	\$50.00 max	n/a	2022 (\$138) 2014 (\$123)
Class B Vehicle	\$243.00	none	\$243.00	none	\$28.00	\$62.00 (\$248/hr)			
Class C Vehicle	\$345.00	none	\$345.00	none	\$28.00	\$92.50 (\$370/hr)			
Class D Vehicle	\$345.00	none	\$345.00	none	\$28.00	\$132.50 (\$530/hr)			
City of Tallahassee									
Class A Vehicle	\$130.00	none	\$130.00	none	\$25.00			N/A	2022 (Changes effective Fall) Prior (\$110)
Class B Vehicle	\$240.00	none	\$240.00	none	\$25.00				
Class C Vehicle	\$400.00	none	\$400.00	none	\$25.00				

ATTACHMENT #2

CURRENT PINELLAS COUNTY RATES / PWOF Recommended Increases

COUNTY	Trespass Tow Fee	Trespass Tow Fee Per Mile	Nonconsensual Tow Fee	Nonconsensual Fee Per Mile	Daily Storage Fee Amount	Labor (beyond initial 30 min, per 15 min)	Admin/Lien Fees	Cover/Tarp Fee	Last Update to Fees
PINELLAS	(nonconsensual only)								
Class A Vehicles	\$125.00 \$147.00 18%	\$4.00 \$5.00 25%	\$130.00 \$153.00 18%	\$4.00 \$5.00 25%	\$25.00 \$30.00 20%	\$25.00 (\$100/hr) \$30.00 (\$120/hr) 20%	\$40-admin/\$35-lien (\$75 total) \$60-admin/\$40-lien (\$100 total) 33%	\$20.00 \$35.00 75%	2019
Class B Vehicles	\$225.00 \$265.00 18%	\$5.00 \$6.00 20%	\$230.00 \$270.00 17%	\$5.00 \$6.00 20%	\$35.00 \$40.00 14%	\$50.00 (\$200/hr) \$60.00 (\$240/hr) 20%			
Class C Vehicles	\$340.00 \$400.00 18%	\$6.00 \$7.00 17%	\$350.00 \$415.00 18.5%	\$6.00 \$7.00 17%	\$60.00 \$70.00 17%	\$75.00 (\$300/hr) \$90.00 (\$360/hr) 20%			
Class D Vehicles	\$440.00 \$520.00 18%	\$6.00 \$7.00 17%	\$450.00 \$530.00 18%	\$6.00 \$7.00 17%	\$60.00 \$70.00 17%	\$100.00 (\$400/hr) \$120.00 (\$480/hr) 20%			