

Chapter 561

(Senate Bill 731)

AN ACT concerning

Vehicle Towing or Removal – Secured Parties – Electronic Notification

FOR the purpose of ~~requiring~~ *authorizing* a person who undertakes the towing or removal of a vehicle from a parking lot to notify any secured party electronically if that form of notice is agreed to by the tower and the secured party in a certain manner; and generally relating to notification of secured parties after towing or removing a vehicle from a parking lot.

BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
Article – Transportation
Section 21–10A–04
Annotated Code of Maryland
(2020 Replacement Volume and 2021 Supplement)

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

Article – Transportation

21–10A–04.

(a) Unless otherwise set by local law, a person who undertakes the towing or removal of a vehicle from a parking lot:

(1) May not charge the owner of the vehicle, the owner’s agent, the insurer of record, or any secured party more than:

(i) Twice the amount of the total fees normally charged or authorized by the political subdivision for the public safety impound towing of vehicles;

(ii) Notwithstanding § 16–207(f)(1) of the Commercial Law Article, the fee normally charged or authorized by the political subdivision from which the vehicle was towed for the daily storage of impounded vehicles;

(iii) If a political subdivision does not establish a fee limit for the public safety towing, recovery, or storage of impounded vehicles, \$250 for towing and recovering a vehicle and \$30 per day for vehicle storage; and

(iv) Subject to subsection (b) of this section, the actual cost of providing notice under this section;

(2) Shall notify the police department in the jurisdiction where the parking lot is located within 1 hour after towing or removing the vehicle from the parking lot, and shall provide the following information:

- (i) A description of the vehicle including the vehicle's registration plate number and vehicle identification number;
- (ii) The date and time the vehicle was towed or removed;
- (iii) The reason the vehicle was towed or removed; and
- (iv) The locations from which and to which the vehicle was towed or removed;

(3) (I) ~~{Shall} EXCEPT AS PROVIDED IN ITEM (II) OF THIS ITEM, SHALL~~ notify the owner, ~~any secured party, and~~ the insurer of record, **AND, EXCEPT AS PROVIDED IN ITEM (II) OF THIS ITEM, ANY SECURED PARTY** by certified mail, return receipt requested, and first-class mail within 7 days, exclusive of days that the towing business is closed, after towing or removing the vehicle, and shall provide the same information required in a notice to a police department under item (2) of this subsection; **AND**

(II) ~~SHALL NOTIFY~~ **MAY PROVIDE NOTICE REQUIRED UNDER ITEM (I) OF THIS ITEM TO ANY SECURED PARTY ELECTRONICALLY, IF THAT FORM OF NOTICE IS AGREED TO BY THE TOWER AND THE SECURED PARTY IN WRITING OR BY ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION;**

(4) Shall provide to the owner, any secured party, and the insurer of record the itemized actual costs of providing notice under this section;

(5) Before towing or removing the vehicle, shall have authorization of the parking lot owner which shall include:

- (i) The name of the person authorizing the tow or removal;
- (ii) A statement that the vehicle is being towed or removed at the request of the parking lot owner; and
- (iii) Photographic evidence of the violation or event that precipitated the towing of the vehicle;

(6) Shall obtain commercial liability insurance in the amount required by federal law for transporting property in interstate or foreign commerce to cover the cost of any damage to the vehicle resulting from the person's negligence;

(7) May not employ or otherwise compensate individuals, commonly referred to as “spotters”, whose primary task is to report the presence of unauthorized parked vehicles for the purposes of towing or removal, and impounding;

(8) May not pay any remuneration to the owner, agent, or employee of the parking lot; and

(9) May not tow a vehicle solely for a violation of failure to display a valid current registration under § 13–411 of this article until 72 hours after a notice of violation is placed on the vehicle.

(b) A person may not charge for the actual cost of providing notice under subsection (a)(1)(iv) of this section if the vehicle owner, the owner’s agent, the insurer of record, or any secured party retakes possession of the vehicle within 48 hours after the vehicle was received at the storage facility.

(c) The Administration shall:

(1) Establish and maintain a database containing the proper address for providing notice to an insurer under subsection (a)(3) of this section for each insurer authorized to write a vehicle liability insurance policy in the State; and

(2) Make the database available to any tower free of charge.

(D) AN AGREEMENT TO PROVIDE NOTICE ELECTRONICALLY MADE IN ACCORDANCE WITH SUBSECTION (A)(3)(II) OF THIS SECTION SHALL REMAIN IN EFFECT UNTIL TERMINATED BY EITHER PARTY.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect October 1, 2022.

Enacted under Article II, § 17(c) of the Maryland Constitution, May 29, 2022.