



Oregon State Board of Towing
Release of Vehicles from the Tow Yard
February 10, 2026

This document does not represent formal Board decisions or policy; the document facilitates board discussion to:

1. Define or clarify ambiguity in Oregon law.
2. Address situations and scenarios submitted in complaints
3. Answer questions or provide clarification to the public, towing industry, and board partners.

ORS 98.850 Legislative findings and declaration

(2) The Legislative Assembly declares that: (a) Statutes that assist members of the public in avoiding involuntary loss of use of motor vehicles and in expediting recovery of motor vehicles and the personal property in the motor vehicles promote the safety and welfare of members of the public.

Objectives:

Discussion questions and concerns from the past weeks regarding the release of vehicles from the tow yard.

Conditions Allowing Release:

1. The tower may require that the tow bill be paid in full prior to release of the vehicle and personal property except personal items of an emergency nature and pets.
2. The tower may require the tow bill be paid in cash under ORS 98.854.
3. The tower can require government-issued photo ID to release the vehicle.
4. The tower can require that the vehicle be released to the titled Owner, per DMV official records.

Towers May Not:

1. Require the vehicle owner present a valid driver's license, proof of insurance, or active vehicle registration (unless required for court or law enforcement release.)
2. Require payment of any fees or charges not itemized on the tower's rate sheet to release the vehicle, including after-hour gate fees if the vehicle is redeemed between the hours of 8 a.m. – 6 p.m., Weekdays, excluding holidays.
3. Refuse to release a vehicle based on perceived impairment of the vehicle operator unless required by the court or law enforcement.

Release from the Tow Yard to Another Tow Company:

1. It is a violation of ORS 822.200 to operate a tow vehicle without an active tow business certificate issued by DMV to the owner of the tow vehicle. Tow business certificates cannot be shared, rented, leased, or otherwise used by a tow company for compensation if the company is not on the tow certificate.
2. A tow yard may require the tow operator to provide the tow business certificate to verify the vehicle registration is current and registered to the tow vehicle providing towing services prior to release of the vehicle.
3. A tow yard is not required to release the vehicle to a tow vehicle operating without a tow business certificate if it is known that the tow vehicle is operated by a company offering tow services for compensation.
4. Tow yards cannot require a tow company or operator to provide information not required to obtain a tow business certificate: Secretary of State Registration, proof of licensure, or other information.

Questions:

1. Can a tow operator/former employee be “trespassed” from a tow yard, with the tow yard refusing to release vehicles after the tow operator is employed by a new company?
2. Can a tow yard refuse to release a vehicle due to unsafe conditions of the tow vehicle?
3. Can an insurance company require a tow company provide its active tow business certificate prior to payment of the tow bill?