

WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT TOWING FEES FOR STOLEN CARS

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ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. – It's bad enough to get your car stolen. But in some cases, victims have had to pay high towing fees to get their car back once it's found.

The reason for those high prices? Deliberations by state agency officials.

Up until this year, the New Mexico Public Regulation Commission set a minimum amount of what towing companies could charge. After surveying a number of businesses, they decided to change the maximum amounts of those rates for different services, which means vehicle theft victims could be paying less if their car gets towed.



“It’s obviously a big concern to us. We want our towing rates to be fair and reasonable,” said Sandy Jones, the chairman of the PRC.

But when a victim of a carjacking can’t go pick up their car, they’re stuck with a large towing bill a few days later.

“The police called it in (and) had to remove the vehicle for safety reasons, then a towing company is contacted through a normal rotation,” Jones said. “They pick the vehicle up and the owner of the vehicle by state law is responsible for all those costs.”

Here's what the public should be aware of. On a towing invoice, everything on the bill should be separated by line item.

"The first mile charge under this tariff is \$100. The second mile through the 25th mile is about \$5 a mile. After 25, getting into 26 miles, it becomes \$3.50 a mile. So they want to pay particular attention to the mileage there," Jones said.

If the tow happens after hours, there's an extra \$15 fee tacked on. That should also be a separate line item, Jones said.

"Make sure that everything in that bill is documented and line-itemed on that bill," he said. "If there are any questions, it's easy to follow up."

If your car is stuck in a difficult-to-reach spot, there's also a \$100 fee per hour to recover it, depending on how difficult it is to retrieve it. That's when the tow sheet comes in handy. It will tell you where your car was found and what condition it's in.

"For instance, if they say it's located in the parking lot, our investigators know that it should not have a recovery fee because it's simple to get to," Jones said.

Last week, a carjacking victim was upset after she was stuck with a \$200 bill. The company has since reached out and decided to waive that fee so she wouldn't be victimized twice.

Citizens are encouraged to reach out to the PRC for any questions about towing fees.