

Brooke Kelley
847-553-3671
brooke.kelley@pciaa.net

FOR RELEASE ON RECEIPT

March 19, 2018

Houston and Dallas Listed as Worst Cities for Towing Hassles in New Survey; PCI Offers Tips to Help Motorists

AUSTIN — Houston and Dallas rank number one and two on the list of U.S. cities with the most hostile towing markets for consumers and Texas is the state most in need of pro-consumer towing reforms, according to a new national towing survey conducted by the Property Casualty Insurers Association of America (PCI).

The survey found that “creative” billing practices such as levying fees and charges simply to increase the bill and establishing high daily storage rates were the worst problems consumers and insurers face when dealing with towing companies. Other frequent problems consumers and insurers encounter include towing company practices that make it difficult to recover a vehicle or even gain access in order to get personal effects or commercial cargo.

“When a shady towing company gets a vehicle on its hook, the owner and insurer may be facing staggering bills and confusing rules to reclaim the vehicle,” said Robert Passmore, assistance vice president, policy, research and international for PCI.

“The outrageous bills from abusive towing companies drive up out-of-pocket expenses for consumers and impact auto insurance costs. While most towing firms are honest, well-intentioned operators, a few bad players have created widespread problems and cast the entire industry in a negative light. Our survey respondents identified over 120 cities across the country as being problematic. Because these problems occur in every state, insurers want to prepare motorists and arm them with the facts.”

The [PCI 2018 National Towing Survey](#) was conducted to shine a spotlight on the top concerns related to towing practices and provide a platform for educating consumers about their rights and the steps they can take to protect themselves from scams.

PCI has outlined four public policy solutions to help curb towing abuses:

- 1) Eliminate the federal pre-emption on state regulation of accident and breakdown towing. This would allow states to protect their citizens from abusive towing practices and fees as they currently do for “non-consent” towing.
- 2) Require invoices be itemized to list all charges on all tows. This provides transparency for vehicle owners and the ability to document abusive billing practices.
- 3) Require clear information be provided to owners, and their insurers regarding the location and release procedures. This would include prohibiting storage fees for days when yard is not open for vehicles to be released.
- 4) Prohibit “wreck chasing” tow trucks that arrive unsolicited at accident scenes.

Following an accident, a motorist may feel vulnerable, but it is important to remember that if you need tow truck assistance you have options. This begins with reviewing your insurance coverage and discussing towing and repair options with your company or agent on an annual basis. PCI has developed a [checklist](#) to help motorists who may require towing services.

Scams often occur when a tow truck just shows up at the scene of an accident. Consumers should exercise their rights and options. Consumers have the following rights:

1. You can refuse a tow for any reason
2. You may choose who will tow your vehicle
3. You decide where your vehicle will be towed
4. You should get an itemized statement of the charges
5. You should receive a copy of the towing authorization form
6. You should request to see a valid towing permit and company identification

Survey Quick Facts:

- Respondents identified 127 cities as being among the most problematic for towing issues.
- The five most problematic cities were: 1) Houston 2) Dallas 3) Chicago 4) New York 5) Los Angeles
- Every state was selected at least once by respondents as being in need of pro-consumer reforms.
- The five states most in need of pro-consumer reforms were: 1) Texas 2) Illinois 3) California 4) Pennsylvania 5) New York

PCI promotes and protects the viability of a competitive private insurance market for the benefit of consumers and insurers. PCI is composed of nearly 1,000 member companies, representing the broadest cross section of insurers of any national trade association. PCI members write \$220 billion in annual premium, 37 percent of the nation's property casualty insurance. Member companies write 44 percent of the U.S. automobile insurance market, 30 percent of the homeowners market, 35 percent of the commercial property and liability market and 37 percent of the private workers compensation market.

###