



LOS ANGELES POLICE COMMISSION

MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 28, 2010

CONTACT: Tami Catania
(213) 236-1405

TOW TRUCK COMPLAINT HOTLINE LAUNCHED

Los Angeles – In an effort to combat bandit towing companies, the Los Angeles Police Commission has set up a towing company complaint hotline where individuals who have a complaint against a towing company can call. The hotline number is:

(323) 680-4-TOW (4869)

Individuals who feel they have been victimized by tow companies that demonstrate unethical and illegal business practices may call this number at any time. The individual will be asked to state their name, phone number, name of the towing company and nature of the complaint. An investigator from Commission Investigation Division, the arm of the Police Commission that regulates permits throughout Los Angeles, will be assigned to look into the complaint.

This hotline is designed to help crackdown on "bandit" tow operators, however complaints will be accepted on all towing companies, as they are all required to be permitted within the City of Los Angeles by the Police Commission Investigation Division.

"Bandit" tow operators are differentiated from law-abiding tow operators by their illegal practice of monitoring police and fire department radio frequencies and unlawfully responding to the scene of traffic collisions, most often times in working in cahoots with unscrupulous repair shops, attorneys and medical practitioners, or staking out private parking lots in order to tow away vehicles whose owners are not patrons of the businesses associated with that lot. Often, the "bandit" tow operators dismiss the fact that the car owner does patronize a business associated with the lot before going elsewhere. Other practices include issues related to hours of operation, the demanding of cash, and excessive charges.

One of the common complaints the Commission Investigation Division receives is that a person's vehicle was towed away after having been parked on commercial or industrial private property for only 5 or 10 minutes. It is the property owner's, or their legal representative's, responsibility to wait one hour (with exceptions for residential properties) before having an illegally parked vehicle removed.

"The Police Commission is hopeful that the towing company complaint hotline, in conjunction with our ongoing efforts to aggressively address towing complaints through "sting" operations and other methods, will send the clear message that we are committed to using all resources available to deter unscrupulous towing operations from engaging in illegal activity," concluded Lt. Phil Hearn, Commanding Officer, Commission Investigation Division.

For more information regarding the tow company complaint hotline and towing issues within the City of Los Angeles, please call Detective III Ben Jones, Commission Investigation Division, at 213 996-1230.

###