Vehicle Tow Procedures

210.1  PURPOSE
The purpose of this standard operating procedure is to provide UMBPD members guidance and direction when towing vehicles, ensuring compliance with policy and current law. These procedures are consistent with the department’s vehicle towing policy (Policy 502).

210.2  POLICY
It is the policy of the UMBPD to ensure the free flow of traffic and take steps to safeguard vehicles from damage and theft.

210.3  DEFINITIONS
Abandoned Vehicle: Any motor vehicle, trailer, or semitrailer that is inoperable and left unattended on public property for more than 48 hours; that has remained illegally parked on public property for more than 48 hours; that has been left unattended on any portion of a controlled access highway as defined in § 8-101 (f) for more than 24 hours; that is not displaying currently valid registration plates or displaying registration plates of another vehicle (please refer to Maryland Transportation Article §25-201).

Disabled Vehicle: A vehicle not functioning properly which is impeding the free flow of traffic or the movement of pedestrians.

Medallion Towing Services: A company contracted by the UMBPD to tow vehicles. Medallion Towing Services vehicles will display on the left cowl of the towing vehicle a numbered medallion.

210.4  GENERAL RULES FOR MEDALLION TOWING SERVICES
A. Only authorized Medallion Towing Services, requested through the Communications Section, shall be utilized for UMBPD towing services of civilian vehicles.

B. Non-medallion tow companies are not authorized to tow for the UMBPD.

C. The owner or operator, unless under arrest, retains full discretion to determine the destination to which the vehicle is to be towed, even if the tow is by a Medallion Towing Service’s vehicle.

D. Once a Medallion Towing Services vehicle has been summoned, it is to be given priority over any other towing vehicle that might arrive at the scene (i.e., if both a Medallion Towing Services vehicle and a non-medallion truck arrive on the scene, the Medallion Towing Services vehicle conducts the tow, even if the non-medallion truck was summoned by the vehicle owner.

E. Multiple vehicles may be towed by Medallion Towing Services if the vehicles are being towed from the same location and going to the same location. However, vehicles being towed as evidence must be towed separately.
210.5 CIVILIAN TOW TRUCK REQUESTS
In all non-emergency situations, officers shall permit the owner/operator the opportunity to contact an automobile or motor club of his/her choice to tow the vehicle, provided the tow truck can arrive within twenty (20) minutes or a reasonable period of time.

210.6 OFFICER RESPONSIBILITIES
A. When an officer needs a tow truck to remove a vehicle, he/she will contact the Communications Section and request a tow truck to respond to the scene.
B. The officer requesting the tow shall provide the Communications Section with the location, make, model, vehicle identification number, and tag number of the vehicle(s) to be towed, and advise if there is a need for special equipment (e.g., dollies, rollback, or heavy towing vehicle for a tractor trailer).
C. The officer requesting the tow will be responsible for completing an Incident Report to capture the incident.
D. The officer requesting the tow will ensure the Medallion Towing Services operator signs the Vehicle Custody Transfer Form prior to towing the vehicle.
E. The officer requesting the tow will ensure the completed Vehicle Custody Transfer Form is submitted to the Shift Supervisor prior to the end of his/her tour of duty.

210.7 SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES
A. The Shift Supervisor shall ensure the Vehicle Custody Tow Form is submitted to the Records Section for further processing.
B. The Shift Supervisor will ensure that the officer requesting the tow completes and submits an Incident Report during the shift in which the tow occurred.

210.8 COMMUNICATION SECTION RESPONSIBILITIES
A. When requested by the on-scene officer, the Communications Section will select and notify the next closest Medallion Towing Services company and inform the requesting officer accordingly.
B. If the Medallion Towing Services vehicle does not arrive within twenty (20) minutes from the time of notification by the Communications Section, the Communications Section shall recontact the dispatcher of the Medallion Towing Services. If the towing vehicle does not arrive at the scene within five (5) minutes of the second call, the Communications Section shall cancel the request and inform the officer that the first tow company will not be permitted to tow the vehicle. Consideration shall be given to abnormal traffic conditions resulting from adverse weather conditions and emergencies.
C. Ascertain the medallion number of the responding towing vehicle and advise the requesting officer of the name, medallion number, time of notification, and an estimated time of arrival.
Vehicle Tow Procedures

210.9 RECORDS SECTION RESPONSIBILITIES
A. The Records Section will be responsible for managing all applicable records related to towed vehicles (i.e., Vehicle Custody Transfer Form, Incident Report, etc.). All records will be retained in accordance with the department’s retention schedule.
B. As soon as reasonably possible but within seventy-two (72) hours of a vehicle being towed, it will be the responsibility of the Records Section to send a certified letter (e.g., notice of tow) to all registered owners and others having a recorded interest in the vehicle. The Records Section shall comply with Policy 502 (Vehicle Towing – 502.6.2) when making notification and, if applicable, posting the notice of abandoned vehicle.
C. The Records Section will maintain a log/ledger of all vehicles towed by the UMBPD.