



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC UTILITIES
TRANSPORTATION OVERSIGHT DIVISION
ONE SOUTH STATION ▪ BOSTON, MA 02110

April 8, 2026

ADVISORY MEMO

Trespass Towing and Police-Ordered Towing in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Pursuant to M.G.L. c. 159B, § 3, towing companies **must** obtain operating authority from the Department of Public Utilities (“Department” or “DPU”) to perform involuntary towing in the Commonwealth. The DPU issues a Certificate of Compliance to tow companies meeting DPU’s requirements.

Involuntary towing includes both trespass tows and police -ordered tows or tows ordered by a municipality or public authority.

Trespass Tow is the movement or removal of a motor vehicle that is authorized, directed or requested by the owner or person in lawful control of real property as authorized in M.G.L. c. 266, § 120D.

Police-ordered Tow is the movement or removal of a motor vehicle that is authorized, directed, or requested by law enforcement with or without the consent of the vehicle owner, and generally includes tows ordered by a municipality or other public authority.

Please consult the DPU’s website to verify that a tow company has a Certificate of Compliance: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/towing-companies-regulated-by-the-department-of-public-utilities-dpu>. Anyone authorizing or directing involuntary towing, such as property managers, property owners or law enforcement may email the DPU’s Transportation Oversight Division to verify a Certificate or for any assistance with a towing matter: dpu.transportation@mass.gov

Tow companies may apply for a Certificate by completing the application: <https://www.mass.gov/how-to/apply-to-perform-involuntary-tows-in-massachusetts>.

Persons authorizing or conducting trespass tows are encouraged to consult M.G.L. c. 266, § 120D. Section 120D applies to the “person who has lawful control of such way or property” and requires notice to local enforcement of trespass tows.

Rates and Charges

Pursuant to M.G.L. c.159B, § 6B and 220 CMR 272, the DPU also sets the rates and charges for involuntary towing: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/220-cmr-27200-rates-for-the-towing-of-motor-vehicles-effective-december-13-2023/download>