

TRANSPORTATION CODE

CHAPTER 684. REMOVAL OF UNAUTHORIZED VEHICLES FROM PARKING FACILITY  
OR PUBLIC ROADWAY

SUBCHAPTER A. GENERAL PROVISIONS

Sec. 684.001. DEFINITIONS. In this chapter:

(1) "Parking facility" means public or private property used, in whole or in part, for restricted or paid vehicle parking. The term includes:

(A) a restricted space on a portion of an otherwise unrestricted parking facility; and

(B) a commercial parking lot, a parking garage, and a parking area serving or adjacent to a business, church, school, home, apartment complex, property governed by a property owners' association, or government-owned property leased to a private person, including:

(i) a portion of the right-of-way of a public roadway that is leased by a governmental entity to the parking facility owner; and

(ii) the area between the facility's property line abutting a county or municipal public roadway and the center line of the roadway's drainageway or the curb of the roadway, whichever is farther from the facility's property line.

(2) "Parking facility owner" means:

(A) an owner or operator of a parking facility, including a lessee, employee, or agent of an owner or operator;

(B) a property owners' association having control under a dedicatory instrument over assigned or unassigned parking areas; or

(C) a property owner having an exclusive right under a dedicatory instrument to use a parking space.

(3) "Property owners' association" and "dedicatory instrument" have the meanings assigned by Section 202.001, Property Code.

(4) "Public roadway" means a public street, alley, road, right-of-way, or other public way, including paved and unpaved portions of the right-of-way.

(5) "Towing company" means a person operating a tow

truck registered under Chapter 643. The term includes the owner, operator, employee, or agent of a towing company, but does not include a political subdivision of the state.

(6) "Unauthorized vehicle" means a vehicle parked, stored, or located on a parking facility without the consent of the parking facility owner.

(7) "Vehicle" means a device in, on, or by which a person or property may be transported on a public roadway. The term includes an operable or inoperable automobile, truck, motorcycle, recreational vehicle, or trailer, but does not include a device moved by human power or used exclusively on a stationary rail or track.

(8) "Vehicle storage facility" means a facility operated by a person licensed under Chapter 2303, Occupations Code. Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 165, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1995. Amended by Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 1420, Sec. 19.008, eff. Sept. 1, 2001; Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 1276, Sec. 14A.839, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

#### SUBCHAPTER B. UNAUTHORIZED VEHICLES

Sec. 684.011. PROHIBITION AGAINST UNATTENDED VEHICLES IN CERTAIN AREAS. (a) The owner or operator of a vehicle may not leave unattended on a parking facility a vehicle that:

(1) is in or obstructs a vehicular traffic aisle, entry, or exit of the parking facility;

(2) prevents a vehicle from exiting a parking space in the facility;

(3) is in or obstructs a fire lane marked according to Subsection (c); or

(4) does not display the special license plates issued under Section 502.253 or the disabled parking placard issued under Chapter 681 for a vehicle transporting a disabled person and is in a parking space that is designated for the exclusive use of a vehicle transporting a disabled person.

(b) Subsection (a) does not apply to an emergency vehicle that is owned by, or the operation of which is authorized by, a governmental entity.

(c) If a government regulation governing the marking of a fire lane applies to a parking facility, a fire lane in the facility

must be marked as provided by the regulation. If a government regulation on the marking of a fire lane does not apply to the parking facility, all curbs of fire lanes must be painted red and be conspicuously and legibly marked with the warning "FIRE LANE--TOW AWAY ZONE" in white letters at least three inches tall, at intervals not exceeding 50 feet.

Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 165, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1995.

Sec. 684.012. REMOVAL AND STORAGE OF UNAUTHORIZED VEHICLE. (a) A parking facility owner may, without the consent of the owner or operator of an unauthorized vehicle, cause the vehicle and any property on or in the vehicle to be removed and stored at a vehicle storage facility at the vehicle owner's or operator's expense if:

(1) signs that comply with Subchapter C prohibiting unauthorized vehicles are located on the parking facility at the time of towing and for the preceding 24 hours and remain installed at the time of towing;

(2) the owner or operator of the vehicle has received actual notice from the parking facility owner that the vehicle will be towed at the vehicle owner's or operator's expense if it is in or not removed from an unauthorized space;

(3) the parking facility owner gives notice to the owner or operator of the vehicle under Subsection (b); or

(4) the vehicle is:

(A) left in violation of Section 684.011 or 684.0125; or

(B) in or obstructing a portion of a paved driveway or abutting public roadway used for entering or exiting the facility.

(b) A parking facility owner is considered to have given notice under Subsection (a)(3) if:

(1) a conspicuous notice has been attached to the vehicle's front windshield or, if the vehicle has no front windshield, to a conspicuous part of the vehicle stating:

(A) that the vehicle is in a parking space in which the vehicle is not authorized to be parked;

(B) a description of all other unauthorized areas

in the parking facility;

(C) that the vehicle will be towed at the expense of the owner or operator of the vehicle if it remains in an unauthorized area of the parking facility; and

(D) a telephone number that is answered 24 hours a day to enable the owner or operator of the vehicle to locate the vehicle; and

(2) a notice is mailed after the notice is attached to the vehicle as provided by Subdivision (1) to the owner of the vehicle by certified mail, return receipt requested, to the last address shown for the owner according to the vehicle registration records of the Texas Department of Transportation, or if the vehicle is registered in another state, the appropriate agency of that state.

(c) The notice under Subsection (b)(2) must:

(1) state that the vehicle is in a space in which the vehicle is not authorized to park;

(2) describe all other unauthorized areas in the parking facility;

(3) contain a warning that the unauthorized vehicle will be towed at the expense of the owner or operator of the vehicle if it is not removed from the parking facility before the 15th day after the postmark date of the notice; and

(4) state a telephone number that is answered 24 hours a day to enable the owner or operator to locate the vehicle.

(d) The mailing of a notice under Subsection (b)(2) is not required if after the notice is attached under Subsection (b)(1) the owner or operator of the vehicle leaves the vehicle in another location where parking is unauthorized for the vehicle according to the notice.

Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 165, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1995. Amended by Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 442, Sec. 1, eff. Jan. 1, 2004.

Sec. 684.0125. UNATTENDED VEHICLES ON PARKING FACILITY OF APARTMENT COMPLEX; REMOVAL AND STORAGE OF VEHICLES. (a) This section applies only to a parking facility serving or adjacent to an apartment complex consisting of one or more residential apartment units and any adjacent real property serving the apartment complex.

(b) The owner or operator of a vehicle may not leave unattended on a parking facility a vehicle that:

(1) obstructs a gate that is designed or intended for the use of pedestrians or vehicles;

(2) obstructs pedestrian or vehicular access to an area that is used for the placement of a garbage or refuse receptacle used in common by residents of the apartment complex;

(3) is in or obstructs a restricted parking area or parking space designated under Subchapter C, including a space designated for the use of employees or maintenance personnel of the parking facility or apartment complex;

(4) is in a tow away zone, other than a fire lane covered by Section 684.011(c), that is brightly painted and is conspicuously and legibly marked with the warning "TOW AWAY ZONE" in contrasting letters at least three inches tall;

(5) is a semitrailer, trailer, or truck-tractor, as defined by Chapter 502, unless the owner or operator of the vehicle is permitted under the terms of a rental or lease agreement with the apartment complex to leave the unattended vehicle on the parking facility; or

(6) is leaking a fluid that presents a hazard or threat to persons or property.

(c) A parking facility owner may not have an emergency vehicle described by Section 684.011(b) removed from the parking facility.

(d) Except as provided by a contract described by Subsection (e), a parking facility owner may not have a vehicle removed from the parking facility merely because the vehicle does not display:

(1) an unexpired license plate or registration insignia issued for the vehicle under Chapter 502 or the vehicle registration law of another state or country; or

(2) a valid vehicle inspection certificate issued under Chapter 548 or the vehicle inspection law of another state or country.

(e) A contract provision providing for the removal from a parking facility of a vehicle that does not display an unexpired license plate or registration insignia or a valid inspection

certificate is valid only if the provision requires the owner or operator of the vehicle to be given at least 10 days' written notice that the vehicle will be towed from the facility at the vehicle owner's or operator's expense if it is not removed from the parking facility. The notice must be:

(1) delivered in person to the owner or operator of the vehicle; or

(2) sent by certified mail, return receipt requested, to that owner or operator.

(f) This section may not be construed:

(1) to authorize the owner or operator of a vehicle to leave an unattended vehicle on property that is not designed or intended for the parking of vehicles; or

(2) to limit or restrict the enforcement of Chapter 683, the abandoned motor vehicle law.

(g) A provision of an apartment lease or rental agreement entered into or renewed on or after January 1, 2004, that is in conflict or inconsistent with this section is void and may not be enforced.

Added by Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 442, Sec. 2, eff. Jan. 1, 2004.

Sec. 684.013. LIMITATION ON PARKING FACILITY OWNER'S AUTHORITY TO REMOVE UNAUTHORIZED VEHICLE. A parking facility owner may not have an unauthorized vehicle removed from the facility except:

(1) as provided by this chapter or a municipal ordinance that complies with Section 684.101; or

(2) under the direction of a peace officer or the owner or operator of the vehicle.

Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 165, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1995.

Sec. 684.014. TOWING COMPANY'S AUTHORITY TO REMOVE AND STORE UNAUTHORIZED VEHICLE. (a) A towing company that is insured as provided by Subsection (c) may, without the consent of an owner or operator of an unauthorized vehicle, remove and store the vehicle at a vehicle storage facility at the expense of the owner or operator of the vehicle if:

(1) the towing company has received written verification from the parking facility owner that:

(A) the parking facility owner has installed the signs required by Section 684.012(a)(1); or

(B) the owner or operator received notice under Section 684.012(a)(2) or the parking facility owner gave notice complying with Section 684.012(a)(3); or

(2) the vehicle is:

(A) left in violation of Section 684.011; or

(B) in or obstructing a portion of a paved driveway or abutting public roadway used for entering or exiting the facility.

(b) A towing company may not remove an unauthorized vehicle except under:

(1) this chapter;

(2) a municipal ordinance that complies with Section 684.101; or

(3) the direction of a peace officer or the owner or operator of the vehicle.

(c) Only a towing company that is insured against liability for property damage incurred in towing a vehicle may remove and store an unauthorized vehicle under this section.

Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 165, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1995.

Sec. 684.015. VEHICLE STORAGE FACILITY'S DUTY TO REPORT AFTER ACCEPTING UNAUTHORIZED VEHICLE. (a) A vehicle storage facility accepting a vehicle that is towed under this chapter shall within two hours after receiving the vehicle report to the police department of the municipality in which the parking facility is located, or, if the parking facility is not located in a municipality having a police department, to the sheriff of the county in which the parking facility is located:

(1) a general description of the vehicle;

(2) the state and number of the vehicle's license plate, if any;

(3) the vehicle identification number of the vehicle, if it can be ascertained;

(4) the location from which the vehicle was towed; and

(5) the name and location of the vehicle storage facility where the vehicle is being stored.

(b) The report required by this section must be made by telephone or delivered personally or by facsimile.

Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 165, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1995.

SUBCHAPTER C. SIGNS PROHIBITING UNAUTHORIZED VEHICLES AND  
DESIGNATING RESTRICTED AREAS

Sec. 684.031. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR SIGN PROHIBITING UNAUTHORIZED VEHICLES. (a) Except as provided by Subsection (a)(2)(B) and Section 684.034 or 684.035 an unauthorized vehicle may not be towed under Section 684.012(a)(1) unless a sign prohibiting unauthorized vehicles on a parking facility is:

(1) facing and conspicuously visible to the driver of a vehicle that enters the facility;

(2) located:

(A) on the right or left side of each driveway or curb-cut through which a vehicle can enter the facility, including an entry from an alley abutting the facility; or

(B) at intervals along the entrance so that no entrance is farther than 25 feet from a sign if:

(i) curbs, access barriers, landscaping, or driveways do not establish definite vehicle entrances onto a parking facility from a public roadway other than an alley; and

(ii) the width of an entrance exceeds 35 feet;

(3) permanently mounted on a pole, post, permanent wall, or permanent barrier;

(4) installed on the parking facility; and

(5) installed so that the bottom edge of the sign is no lower than five feet and no higher than eight feet above ground level.

(b) Except as provided by Section 684.035, an unauthorized vehicle may be towed under Section 684.012(a)(1) only if each sign prohibiting unauthorized vehicles:

(1) is made of weather-resistant material;

(2) is at least 18 inches wide and 24 inches tall;

(3) contains the international symbol for towing vehicles;

(4) contains a statement describing who may park in

the parking facility and prohibiting all others;

(5) bears the words "Unauthorized Vehicles Will Be Towed at Owner's or Operator's Expense";

(6) contains a statement of the days and hours of towing enforcement; and

(7) contains a number, including the area code, of a telephone that is answered 24 hours a day to enable an owner or operator of a vehicle to locate the vehicle.

Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 165, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1995.

Sec. 684.032. COLOR, LAYOUT, AND LETTERING HEIGHT REQUIREMENTS. (a) Except as provided by Section 684.035, each sign required by this chapter must comply with the color, layout, and lettering height requirements of this section.

(b) A bright red international towing symbol, which is a solid silhouette of a tow truck towing a vehicle on a generally rectangular white background, at least four inches in height, must be on the uppermost portion of a sign or on a separate sign placed immediately above the sign.

(c) The portion of the sign immediately below the international towing symbol must contain the words "Towing Enforced" or the information provided by Section 684.031(b)(4) in lettering at least two inches in height. The lettering on this portion of the sign must consist of white letters on a bright red background.

(d) Except as provided by Subsection (e), the next lower portion of the sign must contain the remaining information required by Section 684.031(b) displayed in bright red letters at least one inch in height on a white background.

(e) The bottommost portion of the sign must contain the telephone number required by Section 684.031(b), in lettering at least one inch in height and may, if the facility owner chooses or if an applicable municipal ordinance requires, include the name and address of the storage facility to which an unauthorized vehicle will be removed. The lettering on this portion of the sign must consist of white letters on a bright red background.

(f) Expired

Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 165, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1995.

Sec. 684.033. TELEPHONE NUMBER FOR LOCATING TOWED VEHICLE REQUIRED. If a parking facility owner posts a sign described by Sections 684.031 and 684.032, the owner of a vehicle that is towed from the facility under this chapter must be able to locate the vehicle by calling the telephone number on the sign.

Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 165, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1995.

Sec. 684.034. DESIGNATION OF RESTRICTED PARKING SPACES ON OTHERWISE UNRESTRICTED PARKING FACILITY. A parking facility owner may designate one or more spaces as restricted parking spaces on a portion of an otherwise unrestricted parking facility. Instead of installing a sign at each entrance to the parking facility as provided by Section 684.031(a)(2), an owner may place a sign that prohibits unauthorized vehicles from parking in designated spaces and that otherwise complies with Sections 684.031 and 684.032:

(1) at the right or left side of each entrance to a designated area or group of parking spaces located on the restricted portion of the parking facility; or

(2) at the end of a restricted parking space so that the sign, the top of which must not be higher than seven feet above the ground, is in front of a vehicle that is parked in the space and the rear of which is at the entrance of the space.

Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 165, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1995.

Sec. 684.035. INDIVIDUAL PARKING RESTRICTIONS IN RESTRICTED AREA. (a) A parking facility owner who complies with Sections 684.031 and 684.032 may impose further specific parking restrictions in an area to which the signs apply for individual spaces by installing or painting a weather-resistant sign or notice on a curb, pole, post, permanent wall, or permanent barrier so that the sign is in front of a vehicle that is parked in the space and the rear of which is at the entrance of the space.

(b) The top of the sign or notice may not be higher than seven feet above the ground.

(c) The sign or notice must include an indication that the space is reserved for a particular unit number, person, or type of person.

(d) The letters on the sign or notice must be at least two inches in height and must contrast to the color of the curb, wall,

or barrier so they can be read during the day and at night. The letters are not required to be illuminated or made of reflective material.

Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 165, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1995.

SUBCHAPTER D. REGULATION OF PARKING ON CERTAIN PUBLIC ROADWAY AREAS

Sec. 684.051. REMOVAL OF UNAUTHORIZED VEHICLE FROM LEASED RIGHT-OF-WAY. Unless prohibited by the lease, a parking facility owner or towing company may remove an unauthorized vehicle parked in a leased area described by Section 684.001(1)(B)(i) if the owner or towing company gives notice under Section 684.012(a)(1), (2), or (3) and otherwise complies with this chapter.

Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 165, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1995.

Sec. 684.052. REMOVAL OF UNAUTHORIZED VEHICLE FROM AREA BETWEEN PARKING FACILITY AND PUBLIC ROADWAY. Unless prohibited by a municipal ordinance, a parking facility owner or towing company may remove an unauthorized vehicle any part of which is in an area described by Section 684.001(1)(B)(ii) if notice provided by Section 684.012(a)(2) or (3) is given and the owner or towing company has otherwise complied with this chapter.

Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 165, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1995.

Sec. 684.053. REMOVAL UNDER GOVERNMENTAL ENTITY'S AUTHORITY OF UNAUTHORIZED VEHICLE PARKED IN RIGHT-OF-WAY. (a) A governmental entity that has jurisdiction over a public roadway and that has posted one or more signs in the right-of-way stating that parking is prohibited in the right-of-way may:

(1) remove or contract with a towing company to remove an unauthorized vehicle parked in the right-of-way of the public roadway; or

(2) grant written permission to an abutting parking facility owner to:

(A) post one or more "No parking in R.O.W." signs along a common property line of the facility and the roadway; and

(B) remove vehicles from the right-of-way of the public roadway under this chapter.

(b) A sign under Subsection (a)(2) must:

(1) state that a vehicle parked in the right-of-way may be towed at the expense of the owner or operator of the vehicle;

(2) be placed facing the public roadway:

(A) on the parking facility owner's property not more than two feet from the common boundary line; and

(B) at intervals so that no point in the boundary line is less than 25 feet from a sign posted under this subsection; and

(3) in all other respects comply with Subchapter C.

(c) After signs have been posted under Subsection (b), the parking facility owner or a towing company may remove an unauthorized vehicle from the right-of-way subject to the governmental entity's written permission given under Subsection (a)(2).

Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 165, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1995.

Sec. 684.054. AUTHORITY FOR REMOVAL OF VEHICLE FROM PUBLIC ROADWAY. (a) Under an ordinance of a municipality regulating the parking of vehicles in the municipality, to aid in the enforcement of the ordinance, an employee designated by the municipality may be authorized to:

(1) immobilize a vehicle parked in the municipality; and

(2) remove an immobilized vehicle from a public roadway in the municipality.

(b) A parking facility owner or towing company may not remove a vehicle from a public roadway except under:

(1) this chapter or a municipal ordinance that complies with Section 684.101; or

(2) the direction of a peace officer or the owner or operator of the vehicle.

Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 165, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1995. Amended by Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 301, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 2001.

SUBCHAPTER E. REGULATION OF TOWING COMPANIES AND PARKING FACILITY OWNERS

Sec. 684.081. PARKING FACILITY OWNER PROHIBITED FROM RECEIVING FINANCIAL GAIN FROM TOWING COMPANY. (a) A parking facility owner may not directly or indirectly accept anything of value from a towing company in connection with the removal of a vehicle from a parking facility.

(b) A parking facility owner may not have a direct or indirect monetary interest in a towing company that for compensation removes unauthorized vehicles from a parking facility in which the parking facility owner has an interest.

Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 165, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1995.

Sec. 684.082. TOWING COMPANY PROHIBITED FROM FINANCIAL INVOLVEMENT WITH PARKING FACILITY OWNER. (a) A towing company may not directly or indirectly give anything of value to a parking facility owner in connection with the removal of a vehicle from a parking facility.

(b) A towing company may not have a direct or indirect monetary interest in a parking facility from which the towing company for compensation removes unauthorized vehicles.

Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 165, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1995.

Sec. 684.083. LIMITATION ON LIABILITY OF PARKING FACILITY OWNER FOR REMOVAL OR STORAGE OF UNAUTHORIZED VEHICLE. A parking facility owner who causes the removal of an unauthorized vehicle is not liable for damages arising from the removal or storage of the vehicle if the vehicle:

(1) was removed in compliance with this chapter; and

(2) is:

(A) removed by a towing company insured against liability for property damage incurred in towing a vehicle; and

(B) stored by a vehicle storage facility insured against liability for property damage incurred in storing a vehicle.

Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 165, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1995.

Sec. 684.084. CIVIL LIABILITY OF TOWING COMPANY OR PARKING FACILITY OWNER FOR VIOLATION OF CHAPTER. (a) A towing company or parking facility owner who violates this chapter is liable to the owner or operator of the vehicle that is the subject of the violation for:

(1) damages arising from the removal or storage of the vehicle; and

(2) towing or storage fees assessed in connection with the vehicle's removal or storage.

(b) A vehicle's owner or operator is not required to prove

negligence of a parking facility owner or towing company to recover under Subsection (a).

(c) A towing company or parking facility owner who intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly violates this chapter is liable to the owner or operator of the vehicle that is the subject of the violation for \$300 plus three times the amount of fees assessed in the vehicle's removal, towing, or storage.

(d) In a suit brought under this chapter, the prevailing party is entitled to recover reasonable attorney's fees.

Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 165, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1995.

Sec. 684.085. VIOLATION OF CHAPTER; FINE. A violation of this chapter is punishable by a fine of not less than \$200 or more than \$500.

Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 165, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1995.

Sec. 684.086. VIOLATION OF CHAPTER; INJUNCTION. A violation of this chapter may be enjoined under Subchapter E, Chapter 17, Business & Commerce Code.

Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 165, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1995.

Sec. 684.087. MINOR SIGN OR LETTERING HEIGHT VARIATIONS. A minor variation of a required or minimum height of a sign or lettering is not a violation of this chapter.

Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 165, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1995.

#### SUBCHAPTER F. MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

Sec. 684.101. MUNICIPAL ORDINANCE REGULATING UNAUTHORIZED VEHICLES. A municipality may adopt an ordinance that is identical to this chapter or that imposes additional requirements that exceed the minimum standards of this chapter but may not adopt an ordinance conflicting with this chapter.

Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 165, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1995.