

Guide for People Living in Vehicles



Seattle, Washington | Dept. of Human Services | 2025

If you live in your vehicle and have parking tickets, this guide explains how you can get help.

The City of Seattle has outreach teams that are dedicated to helping vehicle residents. An outreach worker can help you find out how much you owe and explain the options you have for payment.

If you have low income, an outreach worker can help you ask the Seattle Municipal Court for a low-cost payment plan, community service instead of payment, or a reduction in fines.

Please note that the information in this guide only applies to parking tickets from the City of Seattle on public streets, not tickets from private lots.

The outreach teams may also be able to refer individuals living in vehicles to shelter, safe lots, and/or permanent housing. We can assist with vehicle repairs and maintenance, and help you understand how to legally park your vehicle.

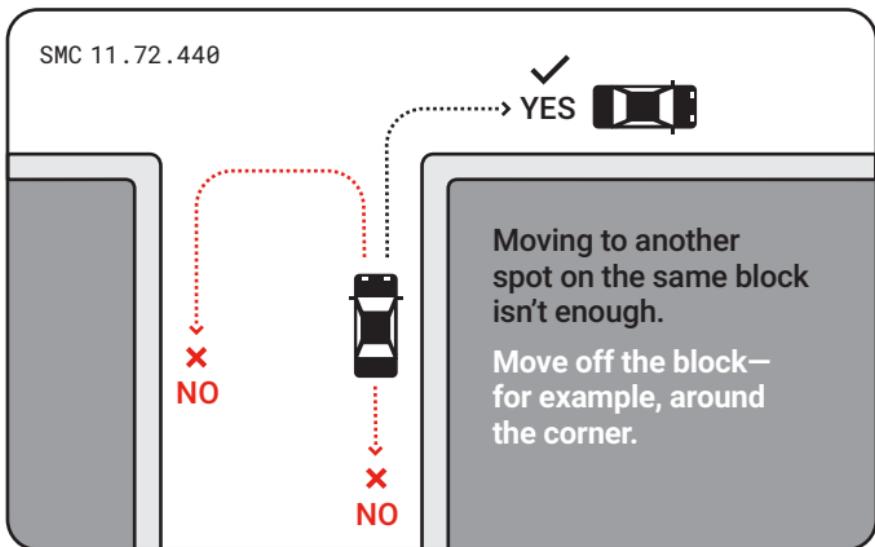
To get help, please call Seattle Human Services at (206) 600-8486 or (206) 507-9428.

Please state where you are parked. An outreach team in your neighborhood will assist you.

Understanding parking regulations when living in your vehicle

The following parking rules can affect you when living in your vehicle. Understanding and obeying all parking laws is important, because violations can result in tickets, fines, fees, and impoundment (towing and storage) of your vehicle.

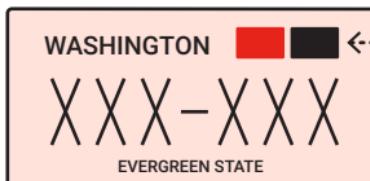
The complete list of Seattle parking regulations is online at: library.municode.com/wa/seattle/codes/municipal_code.



① 72-Hour Rule

2025 FINE = \$65

Vehicles cannot park in the same spot for more than 72 hours. You must move off the block, including both sides of the street. **After 72 hours, your vehicle can be towed.**



Expired tabs are easy to spot and ticket, since tabs are color-coded by month and year.

② Expired/Improper Plates

2025 FINE = \$69

All vehicles must display a valid license when parked on a public street. **If the registration has been expired for 45 days or more, the vehicle may be towed without prior notice.**

Structural Damage

SMC 11.72.500

Cracked Windows

Not licensed

Missing Lights

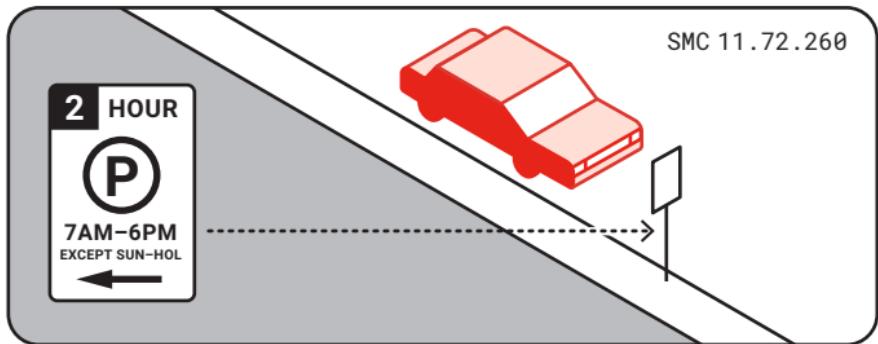
Flat tires

Leaks

③ Junk Vehicle

2025 FINE = \$250

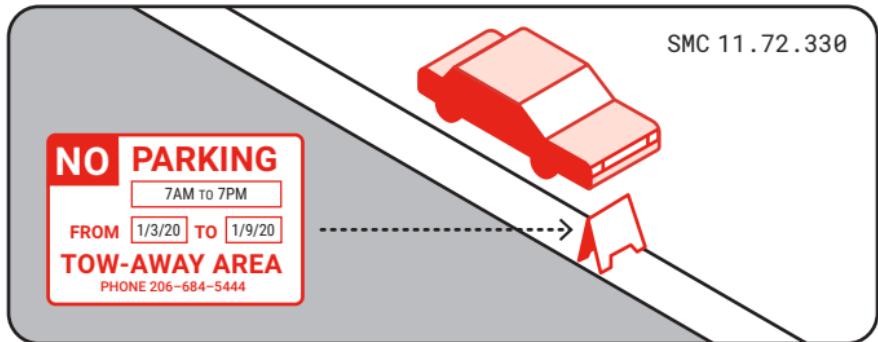
A vehicle is considered a “junk vehicle” if three or more of these conditions are met: extensively damaged; worth \$500 or less; inoperable; or not licensed/registered. **Junk vehicles may be towed without prior notice.**



④ Overtime

2025 FINE = \$65

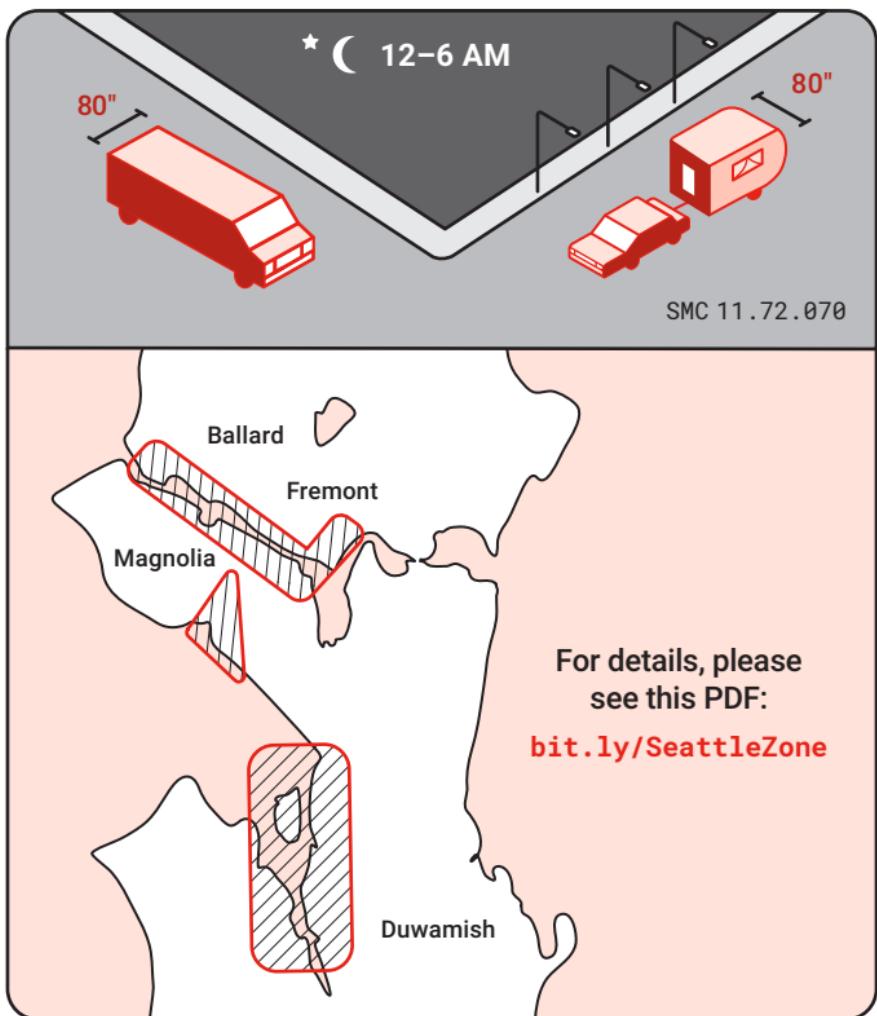
Vehicles cannot park for longer than the time shown on posted signs. You must move off the block, including both sides of the street. Moving up or down the same block is not enough.



⑤ Sign Posted Locations

2025 FINE = \$69

Vehicles cannot be parked at any place or time prohibited by posted signs. Be alert for temporary parking signs on easels. Many areas have multiple signs. **Violators may be towed.**



⑥ Commercial/ Large Size

2025 FINE = \$69

Between midnight and 6am, vehicles that are over 80 inches wide can only park in Seattle's industrial zones. There are three main industrial zones in Seattle. Note that other signs may prohibit parking even within these industrial zones.

I Got a Ticket—Now What?

OPTION 1 If you can pay, pay within 30 days

Online: seattle.gov/courts/tickets-and-payments/pay-my-ticket

A \$3.60 transaction fee is added to your balance.

Visa



By Phone

(206) 233-7000

A \$3.60 transaction fee is added to your balance.

Visa



By Mail

Seattle Municipal Court
PO BOX C-34109
Seattle, WA 98124

Check

Money Order

In Person

Seattle Municipal Court, 600 Fifth Avenue
Seattle, WA 98104

First floor cashier windows are open Mon–Fri from 8am to 5pm.
A secure drop box outside the main entrance is also available 24/7.

Customer (Neighborhood) Service Centers

seattle.gov/customer-service-centers

Check online for hours and addresses of centers in Ballard, Central District, Downtown, Lake City, Southeast, Southwest and the U-District. There is also a Mobile Customer Service Center (schedule online).

Cash

Check

Money Order

OPTION 2 Dispute (fight) your ticket

seattle.gov/courts/tickets-and-payments/dispute-my-ticket

If you think the parking ticket was given incorrectly, you can request a hearing either online; by mail (see the back of the ticket); or by calling (206) 684-5600. **Your hearing request must be made within 30 days of receiving the ticket.**

As a vehicle resident, fighting a parking ticket can be difficult. Consider asking the court to hear your case in a Mitigation Hearing—see page 9.

If you don't respond in 30 days, a \$25 late fee will be added to the original parking fine.

After 45 days, all unpaid and overdue tickets are sent to a collection agency, which adds its own collection fee. The collection agency may also charge interest.

If you have two or more tickets that are overdue and unpaid for 45 days or more, the Washington Department of Licensing (DOL) will automatically place a hold on your vehicle registration. This means you will not be able to renew your car tabs until you address the tickets.

I Can't Pay the Ticket Fines

The court has options for those who are unable to pay. Call (206) 684-5600 and/or visit:

[seattle.gov/courts/tickets-and-payments/pay-my-ticket/
i-cant-pay-my-ticket-right-now](http://seattle.gov/courts/tickets-and-payments/pay-my-ticket/i-cant-pay-my-ticket-right-now)

→ Get More Time to Pay

The court can extend the due date of your payment by 30 days.

→ Set Up a Payment Plan

All payment plans have a \$4 setup fee. The normal payment plan requires a minimum of \$50 per month for up to two years.

If your income is below federal poverty guidelines, you may be eligible for low payment plan of \$25–\$49 per month. To qualify, you will need to provide proof of public assistance. If you are not currently receiving public assistance, the Court Community Resource Center can help you determine if you qualify.

→ Ask to Perform Community Service

If you have low income, you may be able to perform community service to pay off your fines. You can choose from a list of approved agencies (for example, the Salvation Army or the Red Cross). You and the agency will keep a timesheet with the dates and hours of your service to submit to the Seattle Court.

OPTION 3

If you can't afford the low payment plan, and/or you can't perform community service:

Request a Ticket Mitigation Hearing or Ticket Debt Reduction Hearing

Unlike a hearing to dispute your ticket, a mitigation or ticket debt reduction hearing asks the court to reduce or waive fines due to special circumstances—for example, because you live in your vehicle.

MITIGATION HEARING

Mitigation is for parking tickets given within the last 30 days—before the ticket fines are overdue.

[seattle.gov/courts/tickets-and-payments/
dispute-my-ticket](http://seattle.gov/courts/tickets-and-payments/dispute-my-ticket)

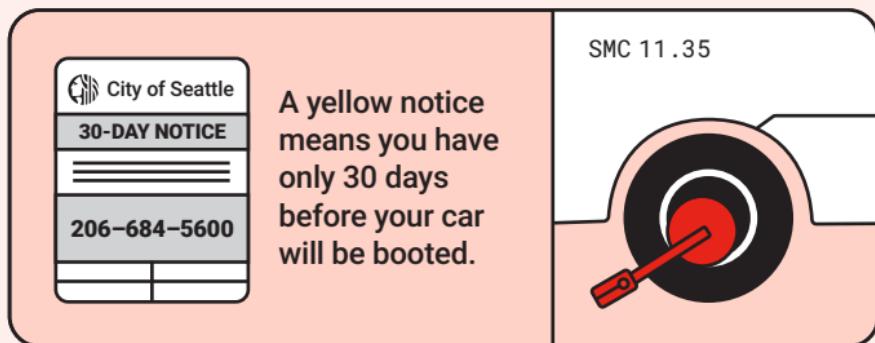
DEBT REDUCTION HEARING

Debt reduction is for people who owe \$300 or more on city parking tickets issued at least 60 days ago. Debt reduction is only available for people receiving or qualified to receive public assistance. For details, please visit:

seattle.gov/courts/tickets-and-payments/i-can't-pay-my-ticket-right-now/ticket-debt-reduction-hearings

Help—I Got Booted!

If you have four or more overdue, unpaid parking tickets, your vehicle will be placed on a “scofflaw list.” This means it can be booted, towed, and after 15 days in impound, sold at a public auction.



If a vehicle has four unpaid tickets, a letter will be sent to the vehicle owner. The vehicle itself may also be tagged with a yellow “30-Day” notice. **If you get either a letter or a vehicle notice, act quickly to avoid being booted. Call the Seattle Municipal Court at (206) 684-5600 and explain that you are living in your vehicle.**

YELLOW 30-DAY NOTICE
YOU HAVE 30 DAYS BEFORE BOOTING

GREEN COURTESY NOTICE
YOU HAVE THREE UNPAID TICKETS

Your vehicle will be towed 48 hrs after it is booted. To avoid being towed, you have two options:

OPTION 1 Pay all fines and fees in full

Pay all parking fines, late fees, collection fees, interest and the \$145 boot fee. Call 1-877-590-3757 to pay with a credit card over the phone, or pay in person at the Seattle Municipal Court or at a Seattle Customer Service Center (see page 6).

OPTION 2 Set up a payment plan

Scofflaw payment plans require either \$200 or 10% of what is owed, whichever is greater. To setup a payment plan, contact the collection agency assigned to the registered vehicle owner.

LAST NAMES STARTING WITH A–O:

1–855–853–2590

LAST NAMES STARTING WITH P–Z:

1–800–241–1305 EXTENSION 2

**You have two days to return the boot.
After two days, you will be fined \$25/day.
Damaged or lost boots cost \$500.**

See boot return locations at: www.seattle.gov/courts/tickets-and-payments/my-car-got-booted

My Car Was Towed (by the City of Seattle)

If your vehicle was towed due to being listed as a scofflaw (you were booted, see page 10), you will not be able to reclaim it before you address your overdue tickets. However, if your vehicle was towed for other reasons, you can reclaim it first, then pay the parking ticket afterwards. To get your car back:

If towed from a public street (not private property), find it by visiting seattleimpound.com, or call Lincoln Towing at: (206) 364-2000

Prepare to pay the tow company

Towing (\$296 for the first hour; \$53 for every 15 minutes afterwards)

Storage fees (\$41.47 every 12 hours)

Seattle city fee (\$15)

Gather documentation to take to the tow yard

License plate number / VIN

Photo ID (driver's license)

Proof of ownership* (vehicle title, current registration, or a copy of the lease agreement)

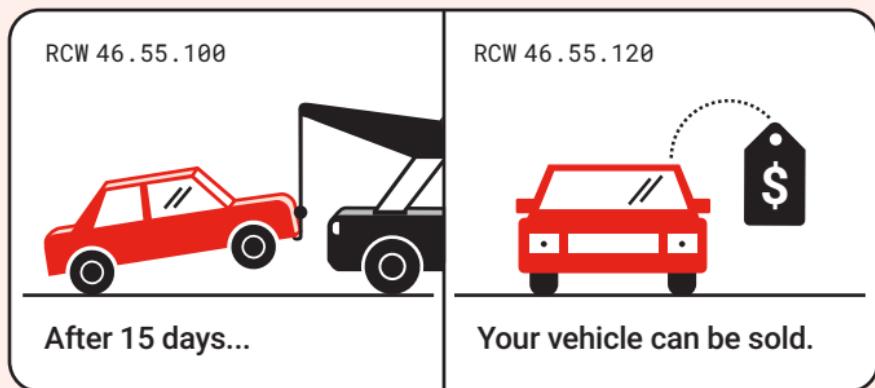
*Another person (not the registered owner) can retrieve a towed vehicle if they have a notarized statement of permission from the registered owner, as well the documentation listed above.

For more details, see:

**[https://www.seattle.gov/courts/tickets-and-payments/
my-car-got-towed](https://www.seattle.gov/courts/tickets-and-payments/my-car-got-towed)**

After 120 hours of storage, the tow company can consider the vehicle to be abandoned. Washington state law requires the tow company to mail the owner a notice of custody and sale.

Fifteen days after mailing the owner this notice of custody and sale, the vehicle can be sold at a public auction.



Money from the auction goes to the tow company to cover its costs. **After the auction, you may still owe the tow company \$1,330 if the sale did not cover its tow costs.** Any extra money from the sale goes to Washington state, although the owner can write and ask for it back (see RCW 46.55.130).

Note: Parking fines are separate from towing fees. Paying the tow company does not clear your parking ticket. Even if you do not retrieve your car, you still owe parking fines.

I Can't Pay the Towing Fees

If you are unable to pay the fees to reclaim your vehicle—or if you think the towing was improper—you can request an impound hearing. At this hearing, you can ask the court to help you with payment. To request an impound hearing:

Gather vehicle documentation

You need the same information that is shown on page 12.

You need to give this information to the tow company so they can fill out a Seattle Court “Impound Hearing Request Form.”

Go to the tow yard to request the impound hearing

You must submit your request within 10 days of being towed.

The tow company will submit the completed form to the Seattle Municipal Court. They will also give you a copy of the form.

Plan to attend the hearing

The date and time of your hearing is shown on your copy of the hearing form. Currently, impound hearings are held at 10am on the second business day after the request is submitted.

Ask for help (mitigation) at the hearing

If you have low income, or there are special circumstances (for example, you live in your vehicle), you can ask the judge for help. They may decide that your vehicle can be released to you if you agree to a payment plan. If you have any evidence that the tow was improper, show it to the judge.

What about the items I left inside my car?

For up to 20 days after your car is towed, you can go to the tow company and retrieve your possessions. At the tow yard, you will need the vehicle documentation shown on page 12. The towing company cannot charge you to get into the vehicle during these 20 days.

If you need more time after 20 days, you can give the tow company a signed “personal belongings store request” from Washington state. The tow company must store your items for an additional 30 days after getting your form.

Download store request form: dol.wa.gov/forms/430505.pdf

Note: If your vehicle was towed from private property (not a city street), the process described here does not apply. Instead:

Find a posted sign with the tow company phone number, or contact the property owner and ask about the tow.

If you still can't find your vehicle, call Seattle Police at the non-emergency number: (206) 625-5011. See also:

seattle.gov/your-rights-as-a-customer/find-a-towed-car

Seattle Human Services

(206) 600-8486 or (206) 507-9428.

Please state your name, your current location, and a phone number where you can be reached. An outreach team in your neighborhood will assist you.

The Community Resource Center

at the Seattle Municipal Court

(206) 684-9291

Seattle Municipal Court Community Resource Center

600 Fifth Avenue, Room 235, Second Floor

smcresource.center@seattle.gov

seattle.gov/courts/crc

Offers social and community services to anyone in need, including food, clothing, hygiene, and bus tickets.

Seattle Municipal Court Customer Service

(206) 684-5600

seattle.gov/courts/tickets-and-payments

Customer service representatives can answer your questions about tickets and vehicle boots.

**Designed by faculty and students at the University of Washington in Seattle:
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The first edition was created for the Interfaith Task Force on Homelessness (ITFH) in collaboration with Bill Kirlin-Hackett, Jean Darsie, and Graham Pruss, PhD.

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