START A BUSINESS - WEST VIRGINIA

How to start a towing company in West Virginia

West Virginia's Public Service Commission regulates third-party tows, with statewide maximum rates for operators without their own tariff; services are presumed taxable.

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1 Is towing right for you?

Towing companies move disabled, damaged and illegally parked vehicles and answer police and motor club calls. It suits owners who can run a 24 hour operation and keep trucks and drivers on the road.

2 Form the business and register for sales tax

1. Choose a structure. LLCs and corporations file with the West Virginia Secretary of State.
2. Register with the West Virginia Tax Division for your business registration and sales tax account. The state rate is 6%, and cities may add up to 1%.
3. Check your city or county for local licenses and zoning.

3 Public Service Commission

Third-party tows (without the owner's consent, such as private property and police tows) are regulated by the Public Service Commission. Operators registered with its Transportation Division that have no approved tariff of their own must stay within the statewide maximum rates: for example, light duty tow and go $102 an hour and outside storage for cars $27 a day (2021 order). Call 1-800-344-5113 to register or file a tariff.

4 Taxes and markings

Services are presumed taxable; ask the Tax Division how towing and storage are treated. Interstate trucks show the company name and USDOT number on both sides.

5 Your first steps

1. Form the business and register with the Tax Division.
2. Register with the Public Service Commission or file a tariff.
3. Buy insurance and ask police about tow lists.
4. List your business on Nearby Car Care

Requirements at a glance

Sales tax on towing services

Required - State - West Virginia Tax Division

Services are presumed taxable in West Virginia unless an exemption applies. Ask the Tax Division how your towing and storage charges are treated.

Public Service Commission registration and rates for third-party tows

Required in some cases - State - Public Service Commission of West Virginia, Transportation Division

Third-party tows (towing done without the owner's consent, such as private property and police tows) are regulated by the Public Service Commission. Operators registered with the Commission's Transportation Division without their own approved tariff are limited to the statewide maximum rates: for example, light duty tow and go $102 an hour and outside storage for cars $27 a day (order of September 20, 2021). Call the Commission at 1-800-344-5113 to register or file a tariff.

Amount: Light duty tow and go $102 an hour; car storage $27 a day outside

Name and USDOT number on trucks in interstate commerce

Required in some cases - Federal - Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration

Commercial motor vehicles subject to the federal rules show the carrier's name and USDOT number on both sides, readable from 50 feet in daylight (49 CFR 390.21).

Official agencies and links

49 CFR 390.21, Marking of self-propelled CMVs and intermodal equipment

Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (eCFR)

https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-49/subtitle-B/chapter-III/subchapter-B/part-390/subpart-B/section-390.21

Maximum Statewide Wrecker Rates (Case No. 20-0796-MC-GI)

Public Service Commission of West Virginia

https://www.psc.state.wv.us/Information/MaximumStatewideWreckerRates.pdf

TSD 300: Sales and Use Tax Exemptions

West Virginia Tax Division

https://tax.wv.gov/Documents/TSD/tsd300.pdf

Frequently asked questions

Who sets towing rates in West Virginia?

The Public Service Commission sets statewide maximum rates for third-party tows by operators without their own approved tariff.

This guide is general information, not legal advice. Rules change and can depend on your city or county, so confirm with the official agencies linked below before you apply.

https://nearbycarcare.com/resources/business/start-towing-company/west-virginia/