

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE · MINNEAPOLIS

Vehicles, Snow Parking Rules and Towing in Minneapolis 2026

Registration belongs to the state, the ticket to the county, the snow rule to the City. And the City's own impound lot page has a separate line for vehicles abandoned due to ICE detention.

SHORT ANSWER

Three authorities, three separate rules. **Registration is the state's**: no inspection and no emissions test, a value-based tax, studded tires illegal, and we **found no** separate local vehicle sticker added by Minneapolis. **The parking ticket is the county's**: it is issued under Hennepin County authority and paid to the county's violations bureau, not to the City counter. **The snow rule is the City's**, and here there are two separate regimes: a three-day **snow emergency** and winter parking restrictions that can run **until April 1**. The single most valuable item in this guide is in the towing section: the City's own impound lot page states that **vehicles abandoned due to ICE detention are released to the owner or a representative at no cost**.

Registration: the state's job, in brief

- **No inspection and no emissions test.** The metro emissions program was repealed by a 1999 act and the statute site today shows only "[Repealed]". We also found no periodic safety inspection for an ordinary passenger car; **there is no appointment, but the obligation does not close**, since equipment such as tires, glass and lamps is enforced on the road.
- **The money goes to registration tax rather than inspection**, and the tax is tied to the car's list price: on a vehicle more than eleven years old the annual item drops to a flat figure, while a new car costs real money. The formula and counter fees are in [the vehicle section of the state guide](#).
- **Insurance costs more here, and the reason is statutory.** Minnesota is a no-fault state; the mandatory package includes personal injury protection as well as uninsured and underinsured motorist coverage. A quote from another state tells you nothing here. Two protections matter for a newcomer, both in the same section: **if no score can be produced because you have no credit history, the insurer must exclude credit as a factor**, and the scoring methodology may not include gender, race, nationality or religion.
- **Studded tires are illegal, chains are allowed**, and winter tires are not mandatory; what people actually buy is a studless winter tire. The foreign-plate exception **does not apply** to a person whose regular place of work or school is in Minnesota.
- **One question we cannot answer:** we **could not verify** whether vehicle registration requires a Social Security number or an ITIN. The license sections contain an explicit provision removing the number requirement; we could not find its counterpart in the vehicle sections. Call the deputy registrar before you go to the counter.

Parking tickets: the City writes them, the county collects

This is the detail that makes a newcomer pay the wrong office. In Minneapolis a street parking ticket is issued **under Hennepin County authority** and payment goes to **the county's violations bureau**. The City's impound lot does not collect the ticket; you cannot even pay it there while retrieving your car. Two consequences: if you delay, the debt accumulates **at the county rather than the City**, and **a ticket that has gone to collections blocks release of your vehicle**. To get the car back the lot asks for **a letter from the county showing the debt is paid**. So the order is: pay the county first, then go to the lot. There is a trap on the tab side too: if your plate tab is **more than 90 days expired** you cannot drive a towed vehicle out.

Snow emergency: three days, three separate rules

PHASE	STARTS	YOU MAY PARK	YOU MAY NOT PARK
Day 1	9 p.m.	Both sides of streets that are not snow emergency routes	Both sides of snow emergency routes (they open once fully plowed)
Day 2	8 a.m.	The odd side of non-route streets; both sides of routes	The even side of non-route streets; both sides of parkways
Day 3	8 a.m.	The even side of non-route streets; both sides of routes and parkways	The odd side of non-route streets

- **The window for moving the car is the evening of Day 2:** between 8 p.m. and 8 a.m. Plenty of people miss that hour.
- **Odd and even are set by building house numbers**, not by the direction of the street or the parking space itself. Find out today whether your building number is odd or even.
- **Sign color tells you the rule:** snow emergency routes carry a red route sign and a **blue street-name sign**; on non-route streets the street-name sign is green or brown. Do not park on a blue-signed street on Day 1.
- **A fully plowed street is open**, even while the emergency runs. But crews can come back to a street more than once, so do not trust a stretch that has not been cleared to the curb. Parkway are plowed on a separate schedule and **no parkway is plowed on Day 3**.

THE REAL TRAP: WINTER RESTRICTIONS RESUME THE MORNING AFTER DAY 3

- The second regime is called **Winter Parking Restrictions**. They begin when snow builds up at the curb and narrows the street for emergency vehicles, they **run with no emergency declared**, and they end when the buildup eases, in any case **by April 1**. The rule is one sentence: you may park on the **odd** side of non-route streets, not the even side.
- When the two regimes overlap the order is this: **if a snow emergency is declared the winter restrictions are suspended** and the three-day calendar governs; from **4 p.m.** on Day 1 you can move off the routes onto either side of non-route streets, and after 9 p.m. the ordinary Day 1 rule begins.
- **And here is the trap: winter restrictions resume at 8 a.m. the morning after Day 3.** If you moved the car to the even side on Day 3, you have to move it **back to the odd side** the next morning. The person who manages the snow emergency correctly but skips this last step gets ticketed.
- Other things change during the restrictions: school zone signs move, critical parking and street use permits are limited to the odd side, and **overnight parking and even-side permits become invalid**. If you have an accessible parking space on the even side, a case-by-case exemption is requested through the City service center.
- **The rules are not published in Turkish.** The City issues the snow emergency rules in Spanish, Hmong, Somali, Lao and Oromiffa, and **Turkish is not on that list**. Reading the rule here and saving a screenshot to your phone is the smallest and most profitable thing to do before winter.
- **The City's own warning is blunt and we carry it as written: you must follow the snow emergency parking rules even if you never received an alert.** So "nobody told me" is not a defense. Call **612-348-SNOW (7669)** to find out whether one is declared; for general questions, **311**, or 612-673-3000 from outside the city.
- **A reflex learned in one city gets your car towed in the next.** In this state the snow regime belongs to the municipality: Minneapolis looks at your house number, St. Paul looks at the sign on the street, Plymouth treats two inches of snow as an emergency, and Minnetonka has no concept of a snow emergency at all. If you move from one settlement to another, **read the rule again**.

A vehicle towed because of ICE detention: released at no cost

In the section where it lists its fees, the City's impound lot page opens a separate line and states that **vehicles abandoned due to ICE detention are released to the owner or a representative at no cost**. The City asks for two things: **evidence of the detention and proof of vehicle ownership**. The reason this provision appears in a law firm's guide is simple: a detained person's car sits somewhere, storage accrues every day, and the family often does not know there is a way out. We **could not find an equivalent waiver in the other four settlements** in this state; we do not say there is none, we say **research could not confirm one**.

- 1 **Find out whether the car is at the lot.** The City lot takes queries at **612-673-5777**, and there is an online search as well. If the car is still in transit it may not appear yet; check again in an hour.
- 2 **Assemble evidence of the detention.** The City asks for "proof of detention" and does not define its form on the page; the detention notice you hold, a custody record, or a letter from your attorney are the documents to gather. Call before you go, **ask which document they accept**, and write the answer down.

- 3 **Assemble proof of ownership:** the title, current registration or the lease, plus the plate number or the vehicle identification number.
- 4 **Decide who goes.** Under the ordinary rule **a relative with the same last name** may collect the vehicle; anyone else needs the owner's **notarized statement**, which carries the authorized person's name, a copy of the owner's identification, the plate or vehicle identification number, and the make and year. Because someone will be going on behalf of a detained person this part is critical: **arrange the notarized authorization early.**
- 5 **Bring a licensed driver to drive the car off the lot.** The City requires the vehicle to be driven out, and that takes a licensed driver.

WHAT THIS PROVISION IS AND WHAT IT IS NOT, IN THE SAME BREATH

- **It is a fee waiver.** It has **no effect** on the detention itself, its process or its outcome; the City simply releases the vehicle at no cost. The detention case runs on the federal side and this creates no right there.
- **In money terms it still matters:** an ordinary tow is **\$222** standard, with storage at **\$18 a day** accruing as of midnight. Every night of waiting is another \$18.
- **Two obstacles stand independently of the waiver.** First, the ticket block: with five or more unpaid parking tickets, or if one of your tickets has gone to collections, the City **will not release** the vehicle until the debt is paid, and a letter from the county is required. Second, the tab block: if your plate tab is **more than 90 days expired** you cannot drive the car out.
- **Two things to do today:** save the lot's number (**612-673-5777**) in your phone, and keep a copy of your title somewhere reachable at home. If a family member is detained, the first hours go to phone calls, lawyers and childcare; the car is the last thing anyone thinks of.
- **Do not assume you can claim this outside Minneapolis.** We could not verify whether the waiver has a counterpart in St. Paul, Plymouth or Minnetonka.

An ordinary tow: fees and documents

ITEM	AMOUNT
Standard tow	\$222
Daily storage (accrues as of midnight)	\$18
Heavy vehicle tow	\$224.50 plus crane time (\$124.50 per half hour)
Notice letter	\$6
Vehicle abandoned due to immigration detention	No cost (with proof of detention and ownership)

When you go to collect the car, bring: **proof of insurance issued in your own name for that vehicle**, current registration, the title or the lease, the plate or vehicle identification number, **photo identification such as a driver license or state ID card**, and a licensed person to drive. Payment is taken in cash, by check, money order and card; **temporary checks and checks without a printed address are not accepted**, and the address on a personal check must match the address on your identification. The lot is at **50 Van White**

Memorial Blvd. Hours change during a snow emergency: Day 1 closes at 1 a.m., Day 2 runs 6 a.m. to 1 a.m., Day 3 runs 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. So for a car towed during an emergency, **going the same night is possible.**

Living without a car: light rail, the fare card and the airport

- **There are two lines.** One runs south from downtown, stops at **both airport terminals** and ends at the shopping center; the other passes the university and reaches **downtown St. Paul**. They cross downtown. **Travel between the two terminals is free**, so a person who gets off at the wrong terminal fixes it without paying.
 - **You tap the card on the platform before boarding.** There are no turnstiles; the system runs on proof of payment and fares are checked on board. A rider who skips the platform tap is treated as having evaded deliberately.
 - **Verified pass items:** a 7-day pass is **\$20**, a 31-day local pass **\$65**, a 31-day express pass \$120. A replacement card damaged by fare equipment is \$5. **We do not print the single-ride figure**, because the regional council's fact page and the transit agency's fare page did not agree on the adult local peak fare; check the agency's own fare page before you board.
 - **The transit assistance program is the most valuable item in this section:** it brings the fare down to **\$1 per ride** even at peak, with a two and a half hour transfer. Eligibility runs either through an income threshold **or through an enrolled community organization vouching for you**. That second route is built exactly for a newcomer: the door is open to someone with no U.S. income documents. The discount ends **365 days** after first use.
 - **One question we cannot answer:** we **could not verify** whether identification or a number is required to buy a card or to enroll in that program. Take your passport and a proof of address when you visit a service center.
 - **A note for immigration court:** there is a light rail stop at the court's door and parking is free. The detail is in our official offices directory.
 - **A new line is on the way**, an extension running to the western suburbs. **We do not print an opening date**, because we could read it only from the search summary of a blocked page and could not verify it.
- 1 **Look at the age of the car you buy.** The tax is tied to the original list price; a new car is expensive here on an annual basis.
 - 2 **Call the deputy registrar before you go** and ask about the identification number and the document list; this guide does not answer that question.
 - 3 **Compare quotes by coverage list**, not by premium; personal injury protection is mandatory here.
 - 4 **Buy studless winter tires.** Studs are illegal and the foreign-plate exception does not apply to someone working or studying here.
 - 5 **Find out whether your building number is odd or even** and save the snow line in your phone.
 - 6 **Put the morning after Day 3 in your calendar.** Winter restrictions resume at 8 a.m. and the car has to go back to the odd side.
 - 7 **Pay parking tickets to the county**, not the City, and get the letter showing the debt is paid before you retrieve the car.

- 8** When you look at rentals, ask about a garage or reserved parking and ask for the answer in the lease. A car towed twice over one winter usually costs more than a season of off-street parking.



TURKISH-SPEAKING IMMIGRATION ATTORNEY IN MINNEAPOLIS

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