

30-Day Impound

No License – No Car – No Excuses

Why was my car impounded?

Your vehicle was impounded because you or another individual driving your vehicle has:

***a suspended license,
a revoked license,
or, does not have a valid license.***

California Vehicle Code Sections 14602.6 AND 14607.6

On January 1, 1995, new laws were enacted relating to unlicensed drivers. These laws, California Vehicle Code Sections 14602.6 and 14607.6, authorize law enforcement agencies to tow and impound vehicles for 30 days when driven by unlicensed, suspended or revoked drivers. There is a possibility the vehicle could be forfeited (taken from you) if you have a prior conviction for driving while unlicensed, or with a suspended or revoked license.

14607.4 - The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

- (a) Driving a motor vehicle on the public streets and highways is a privilege, not a right.
- (b) Of all drivers involved in fatal accidents, more than 20 percent are not licensed to drive. A driver with a suspended license is four times as likely to be involved in a fatal accident as a properly licensed driver.
- (c) At any given time, it is estimated by the Department of Motor Vehicles that of some 20 million driver's licenses issued to Californians, 720,000 are suspended or revoked. Furthermore, 1,000,000 persons are estimated to be driving without ever having been licensed at all.
- (d) Over 4,000 persons are killed in traffic accidents in California annually, and another 330,000 persons suffer injuries.
- (e) Californians who comply with the law are frequently victims of traffic accidents caused by unlicensed drivers. These innocent victims suffer considerable pain and property loss at the hands of people who flaunt the law. The DMV estimates that 75% of all drivers whose driving privilege has been withdrawn continue to drive regardless of the law.
- (f) It is necessary and appropriate to take additional steps to prevent unlicensed drivers from driving, including the civil forfeiture of vehicles used by unlicensed drivers. The state has a critical interest, namely the protection of the health, safety, and welfare of Californians from the harm of unlicensed drivers, who are involved in a disproportionate number of traffic incidents, and the avoidance of the associated destruction and damage to lives and property.

How long will my vehicle be impounded?

The vehicle will be impounded for 30 calendar days. The registered owner will have to pay for the towing and the 30-day storage fee to get the vehicle back at the end of that period. The following excuses will not help you when your vehicle is being driven by an unlicensed driver and stopped by a law enforcement officer for any reason.

It was a minor infraction...why was my car impounded?

Both 14602.6 and 14607.6 of the California Vehicle Code give law enforcement officers the authority to impound your vehicle when it is being operated by an unlicensed, suspended or revoked driver. Your car is being impounded because you have committed a misdemeanor, not an infraction. By operating a motor vehicle without a valid driver's license you have committed a serious offense. In addition to the citation, the vehicle you are operating will be impounded and held for 30 days, or possibly forfeited.

I don't understand...why 30 days? I absolutely need my car!

The legislature intended to provide safer roads for California's motoring public by removing the vehicles driven by unlicensed, suspended or revoked drivers for 30 days. A serious violation of the law calls for a serious response. The 30-day impound begins on the calendar day that the car is towed and will be released at the conclusion of the 30th day.

My brother borrowed the car. I did not know his license was suspended.

Under section 14604 CVC, the owner of a motor vehicle has the duty to assure the person driving their vehicle has a valid license; however, if you allow or permit anyone, including your wife, son or daughter, friend or relative to drive your vehicle and that person does not have a valid license, you will be responsible for the towing and storage fees. You will not have access to the vehicle for 30 days.

She took my car without my permission. I am the owner and I have a valid license.

To say someone has taken your car without your permission is not a valid excuse. Ask yourself: How did this happen? Have you allowed him/her to use your car before? Did you ask to see his/her license? Any vehicle impounded for this violation will be released to the registered owner after 30 days.

NOTE: If, in fact, it is determined that your car was taken by an unlicensed driver without your knowledge or permission, a stolen vehicle report must be filed. The person charged with this crime will be arrested.

What happens to my car...who impounds the car?

Your car will be stored at a tow yard and you will be given a receipt.

Why is driving without a valid license so serious?

Driving in California is a privilege, not a right. An unlicensed driver is a potential danger to all other motorists on the road. A driver who is unlicensed, suspended, or revoked has been ordered not to drive because of previous driving violations. Continuing to drive shows a flagrant disregard to the safety of other motorists.

How do I get my car released?

At the end of 30 days, you must obtain a release from the Galt Police Department. The vehicle may be released prior to the end of the 30-day period when the driver reinstates his or her driver's license or acquires a driver's license and proper insurance. You will be given a release after paying an administrative fee related to the towing, processing and storage of your vehicle.