

The Voice of America's Towing Industry

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TRAA 2026 Legislative Priorities

Towing and recovery professionals are frontline first responders who play a critical role in roadway safety, emergency response, and the uninterrupted flow of commerce. Every day, towers respond to crashes, breakdowns, and hazardous incidents on the nation's roads—often working inches from live traffic to protect motorists, first responders, and infrastructure. This work comes at a significant personal cost: on average, a tow operator is killed every seven days on American roadways.

First and foremost, TRAA supports policies that enhance roadside safety, strengthen enforcement and awareness of Slow Down Move Over laws, and protect those working on the shoulder. These unquestionably save lives, and when towers are able to operate safely, roads reopen faster, secondary crashes are prevented, and everyone who travels on our highways are better protected.

Surface Transportation Reauthorization: Emergency Towing Exemptions

Congress has already recognized the critical public safety role of towing and recovery professionals by creating a federal emergency towing weight exemption in the FAST Act of 2015. That exemption was intended to allow towers to quickly and safely clear disabled or wrecked vehicles from interstate highways, protecting motorists, first responders, and traffic flow.

In practice, however, inconsistent state interpretation of the statute has limited towers' ability to use the exemption Congress provided. TRAA is seeking targeted statutory clarification to reinforce congressional intent and ensure the existing weight exemption can be applied uniformly during real-world emergency response. TRAA is also requesting that Congress extend comparable emergency flexibility to vehicle length restrictions, aligning length treatment with the existing weight exemption to reflect the operational realities of modern towing.

Clarifying the weight exemption and extending it to length would improve safety, reduce secondary crashes, promote consistency across states, and ensure towing and recovery professionals can safely and efficiently perform the lifesaving work they do each day. **TRAA supports inclusion of this policy in the upcoming Surface Transportation Reauthorization and urges its advancement to address these technical fixes. We respectfully ask your boss to communicate their support to Committee staff.**

Clarifying Insurance Reimbursement and Advancing Transparency for Safety-Critical Towing Services

Towing and recovery professionals are first responders and essential Traffic Incident Management (TIM) partners who play a critical role in clearing crash scenes, restoring traffic flow, and protecting motorists and roadside responders. These operators are routinely directed by law enforcement or state DOTs to perform complex, safety-critical services—including vehicle recovery, cargo removal, and debris cleanup—necessary to fully reopen roadways and prevent secondary crashes. While federal TIM guidance recognizes these functions as core safety responsibilities, motor carrier insurance requirements do not clearly or consistently provide reimbursement for this mandated work.

As a result, many small, family-owned towing businesses face denied or disputed insurance claims for services they were legally required to perform, creating an unfunded mandate that increases costs, delays incident

clearance, and undermines roadway safety. These reimbursement gaps are frequently mischaracterized as “predatory towing,” when in reality they stem from inadequate insurance coverage, outdated coverage requirements, and the routine denial or delay of coverage for legitimate charges associated with real-world crash scene conditions.

TRAA supports continued congressional attention to this issue, including encouraging the creation of a Tow Services Transparency Task Force (TSTTF). Convening federal agencies, insurers, law enforcement, and industry stakeholders would help ground the discussion in data, safety outcomes, and operational realities—shifting the focus away from oversimplified narratives and toward solutions that promote timely incident clearance, protect first responders, and support the small businesses that keep America’s highways moving.

TRAA appreciates the opportunity to brief your office and stands ready to serve as a resource as discussions continue. While we are not prescriptive about a single solution, we believe the creation of a task force is an important first step. In addition, we encourage Congress to work with FMCSA to evaluate whether updated guidance to insurers is warranted to address outdated practices and, if necessary, to explore targeted statutory changes to ensure these safety-critical services are appropriately recognized and reimbursed.

Clarifying Insurance Coverage for Mandated Debris Cleanup

Towing and recovery professionals are essential Traffic Incident Management (TIM) partners and first responders who play a critical role in clearing crash scenes, reopening roadways, and preventing secondary crashes. Following commercial motor vehicle (CMV) incidents, law enforcement and state DOTs routinely direct towers to remove not only disabled vehicles, but also cargo, vehicle parts, and roadway debris that must be cleared before traffic can safely resume.

While federal safety policy clearly recognizes rapid debris removal as a core roadway safety function, motor carrier insurance requirements do not explicitly require coverage for this mandated work. As a result, towing and recovery operators—most of whom are small, family-owned businesses—frequently face denied or disputed insurance claims for debris cleanup they were legally required to perform at the direction of public authorities.

This gap undermines both safety and mobility. Until debris is cleared, lanes remain closed, congestion worsens, freight movement is disrupted, and the risk of secondary crashes increases—putting motorists and first responders at risk. When insurers deny coverage, towers absorb significant costs associated with labor, specialized equipment, disposal, and environmental compliance, creating an unfunded public safety mandate.

TRAA is working with USDOT to raise awareness of this issue and supports additional clarity from FMCSA to better align insurance frameworks with modern TIM practices. Clear federal guidance recognizing mandated debris cleanup as an integral part of incident response would reduce disputes, support faster clearance, and advance shared safety and economic goals.

Consider Towing Industry Concerns When Implementing Electric Vehicle Policy

As electric vehicles (EVs) become more common, towing and recovery operators face increased safety, operational, and cost challenges as essential TIM partners. EVs are significantly heavier than gas-powered vehicles, requiring additional equipment and exacerbating weight-related regulatory and infrastructure constraints.

EV battery fires also pose serious and ongoing risks, including electric shock, thermal runaway, and delayed reignition that can extend through transport and storage. Towers must store EVs separately, incurring added costs that are often not reimbursed.

TRAA supports the Responder and Recovery Safety in EV Fires Act. To cosponsor, contact Representative Obernolte’s office through [Will Burns at william.burns@mail.house.gov](mailto:william.burns@mail.house.gov); or Senator Sheehy’s office through [Andy Downing at andrew_downing@sheehy.senate.gov](mailto:andrew_downing@sheehy.senate.gov).