



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO
REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL

DATE ISSUED: March 29, 2013 REPORT NO: 13-15
ATTENTION: Public Safety and Neighborhood Services Committee
Agenda of April 10, 2013
SUBJECT: San Diego Police Department Tow Administration Update
REFERENCE: None

REQUESTED ACTION: This is an information only item

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: N/A

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF ITEM BACKGROUND:

In June 2009, the City of San Diego entered into a contract with AutoReturn to provide a computer aided dispatch system for the police-initiated tow program. In March 2011, the City entered into contracts with thirteen tow providers for towing services, and two providers for impound and storage services. The restructuring of the tow program provided an opportunity for new companies to participate in the City's tow program. The new tow program became operational in September 2011.

AutoReturn provides dispatch services and logistics to monitor the tow providers and impound yards for fee consistency, equipment safety, and timely response to tow requests. The previous contract was completed via a month to month basis with limits to the accuracy of the towing data, inability to enforce fees in all towing cases, and had resulted in litigation to the City. Staff was asked to provide an annual update for the first full year of tow operations within the tow contract.

This report will update current Tow Administration information as it relates to the San Diego Police Department tow contract by providing statistics on total tows, tow types, and response times for calendar year 2012. A summary of completed inspections on licensed tow provider trucks and licensed impound provider lots; along with operational system upgrades and completed training will be listed.

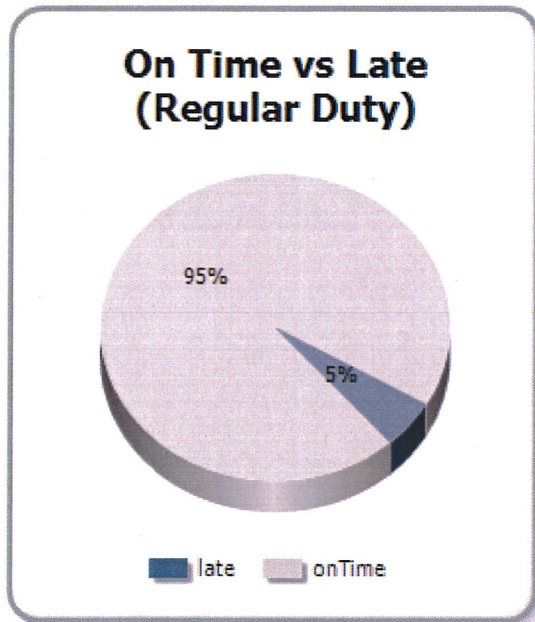
Reason Category	# of Tows (All)
ABANDONED	251
ABATEMENT	903
ACCIDENT/SERVICE	4587
ALARM	113
CITATIONS	1433
CITY TOW/SERVICE	555
DUI	34
EVIDENCE	720
FORFEITURE	35
IN CUSTODY	2040
OBSTRUCTION	1510
PARKING	3159
PEDICAB	1
REGISTRATION	4294
SALE REMOVAL	1
SPECIAL EVENTS	480
SPEED CONTEST	25
STOLEN	2214
ULD	4800
UNKNOWN	1178
Total	28333

TOW VOLUME:

Prior to the current City tow contract, the yearly volume for police-initiated tows had been decreasing. The total tow volume continues to drop for calendar year 2012. The Police Department initiated 28,333 tows for the 20 categories listed on the chart to the left. The highest amounts of tows are being generated for unlicensed drivers (ULD), 4,800 tows; accidents, 4,587 tows; and registration, 4,294 tows. This is a decrease from 32,544 tows in calendar year 2011 and 40,091 tows in calendar year 2010. Two primary reasons have been attributed to the decline in tow numbers. The first, a change in operating policy which allows officers increased discretion on whether to tow a vehicle; the second, a decrease in the amount of sworn officers in relation to calls for service has reduced proactive patrol which generates tows due to parking or registration violations.

Towed Vehicle Impounds Per Year

<u>2008</u>	<u>47,585</u>
<u>2009</u>	<u>46,857</u>
<u>2010</u>	<u>40,091</u>
<u>2011</u>	<u>32,544</u>
<u>2012</u>	<u>28,333</u>



RESPONSE TIMES:

The tow contract between the City and the licensed tow providers, (LTPs), requires a response time of no more than 30 minutes for regular duty tows. This time requirement is in effect 24 hours a day, 7 days a week upon relaying of the tow request to the LTP and the arrival of the tow truck at the scene. The exception being SDPD beat 235, San Pasqual community, due to its rural location. Regular duty tows accounted for 27,934 of the 28,333 tows dispatched by AutoReturn for SDPD. AutoReturn maintains a database that on a daily basis reports to the Tow Administration Unit and the LTP's any violation of the 30 minute response time. Calendar year 2012 shows a 95 percent compliance rate of the response time requirement with the average time for the LTP's arrival on scene being 17.81 minutes. The quick arrival decreases the amount of time officers are out of service on tows and increases the speed in which accident scenes can be cleared to resume normal traffic flow. Having multiple LTP's serving the busier tow volume zones as well as having the drivers stage themselves strategically throughout the City has also reduced the response times.

TRAINING:

The Tow Administration Unit has completed training at all SDPD patrol commands, Traffic Division, and Parking Enforcement. These commands make up the majority of the tow requests generated within the City. The training had an emphasis on proper documentation on the ARJIS11 impound form. Proper documentation is critical for accurate post storage hearing requests which are handled by the Tow Administration office. Post storage hearings must be completed within 72 hours upon request by the registered owner of the vehicle towed. Accurate documentation along with ensuring the correct vehicle code tow section is being utilized ensures that the tow is valid and no fees are reversed to the City. An update on dispatch protocol for more effective tow requests and an explanation of the current status of tow operations in conjunction with AutoReturn was included in the training. Complaints or concerns with the tow operations system were either addressed by the Tow Administration Unit or relayed to AutoReturn.

OPERATIONAL UPGRADES:

AutoReturn has launched a "closest to" dispatch system. The dispatcher receiving the tow request has the ability to locate the closest LTP's driver to a call utilizing the GPS system installed in their phones thus reducing response times. The "closest to" dispatching was brought online over a period of several months with tow zones 1, 4, and 5 now operational. Additional tow zones will be brought online in the future.

When AutoReturn began its contract with the City in late 2011, they issued Sprint, Nextel style phones to the LTP's in a quantity compatible with their tow coverage area and call volume. The LTP drivers were instructed to carry the phones with them in the field in order to receive dispatches and respond in a timely fashion. As tow operations progressed certain cell service gaps in coverage areas and an unforeseen downsizing of the Nextel network by Sprint began to negatively affect dispatch accuracy and tow response times. AutoReturn has offered the LTP's, on a voluntary basis, a credit of \$200 towards the purchase of a smart phone of their choice that is compatible with AutoReturn's dispatching application. The LTP's may use any service provider that they find has adequate coverage in their particular tow zones.

The majority of the LTP's have taken advantage of the offer and it has had a positive impact for officers in the following ways:

- The new phones continue to have GPS compatibility which allows AutoReturn to dispatch using their "closest to" system. The drivers have the phones with them and stage throughout the City thus reducing response times.
- The new phones can utilize their camera function to document any pre-existing damage to towed vehicles and download the pictures to the impound management system. This helps to resolve complaints of damage to vehicles by LTP's to the Tow Administration Unit and City Risk Management.
- The \$200 purchase credit has enabled the LTP's to purchase more phones for their drivers than the number of Nextel style phones originally issued. The more phones in the field directly reduce the response times of LTP's to calls for service by officers.

INSPECTIONS:

The Tow Administration Unit and AutoReturn representatives completed inspections of all licensed tow providers, (LTPs), and licensed impound providers, (LIPs) in early 2013.

The first phase was a physical inspection of all regular duty trucks. Notice was sent to all LTPs requiring them to bring their regular duty trucks to Qualcomm Stadium over a 3 day period. 117 trucks were inspected utilizing the CHP 234B form for compliance. Less than 10 trucks had minor safety concerns, those trucks were repaired during the inspection period and re-inspected prior to their return to SDPD tow service. The LTP drivers had their authorized City tow provider ID cards and California drivers licenses checked during the inspection with no violations noted.

The second phase was a physical inspection of all LIP lots. Guidelines set forth in the SDPD tow manual were utilized for inspection standards. Notice went out to all LIPs and inspections were conducted at unannounced times and days to ensure compliance. No major violations were noted with minor concerns being addressed at the time of the inspection.

CONCLUSION:

The current City of San Diego Tow program has been established to provide quick, prompt, and safe service to the employees of the San Diego Police Department while keeping the citizens safe from illegal or unscrupulous towing or impound operators with regards to police-initiated towing. The contract allows for constant monitoring of tow activities and the ability to quickly address any concerns the City, the Police Department, or its citizens may have with the tow program. Lastly, the qualified LTPs and LIPs are working with secure contracts that protect the City, the contractors, and the citizens.

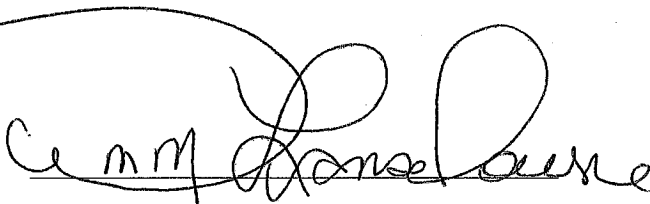
FISCAL CONSIDERATIONS: N/A

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY CONTRACTING INFORMATION (if applicable): N/A

PREVIOUS COUNCIL and/or COMMITTEE ACTIONS: N/A

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND OUTREACH EFFORTS: N/A

KEY STAKEHOLDERS AND PROJECTED IMPACTS: San Diego Police Department, Licensed Tow Providers, Licensed Impound Providers, and AutoReturn



Chief of Police