

Confounded towing

City should keep tabs on which vehicles are moved and where

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THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

Construction is a fact of life in a dynamic city, and sometimes parking rules have to be adjusted in order to accommodate work.

But if Columbus officials plan to continue to allow contractors to tow private vehicles so that work can proceed, the process needs to be tightly controlled. This should go without saying, but the city needs to mark clearly where people can't park, and, barring that, it should make absolutely sure that the owners are notified somehow if their cars must be moved.

What happened to one local couple shouldn't be allowed to happen again.

One late July night, Andrew and Stacey Dorr parked their car on Marconi Boulevard, near Spring Street, to attend a Columbus Clippers game in the Arena District. They parked in a spot they had used before for games.

Kokosing Construction has been resurfacing Downtown streets this summer. Workers moved the Dorrs' vehicle and 20 others that night. And at least in the case of the Dorrs' vehicle, everything that could go wrong did.

A Columbus police officer is supposed to be present at the time of the towing, and he or she is supposed to fill out a sheet to document where the car is taken. The workers say an officer was there, but the Columbus Division of Police has no record of the Dorrs' car being moved.

When the couple couldn't find their car after the game, logically they called the impound lot. Of course it wasn't there, so the Dorrs reported their car stolen to the Columbus police and their insurance company.

Four days later, they found their car parked farther south on Marconi, next to City Hall — with two parking tickets stuck to the windshield. Mr. Dorr reasonably wonders why the Police Division doesn't cross-reference databases of parking tickets issued with stolen-vehicle reports.

On the night the Dorrs attended the ballgame, no hoods covered the parking meters to let drivers know that the spaces were off limits. The company says it posted paper signs on orange cones along the street, but the Dorrs say they didn't see the signs or even any construction equipment.

The city dismissed the parking tickets — as well it should — but the fact remains that the Dorrs were inconvenienced for four days, left to get by without their car and to solve this mystery on their own.

Perhaps the circumstances never would again align so perfectly for this comedy of errors to recur, but the police and the city ought to look at where the system broke down. Such horror stories do nothing to encourage people to try visiting Downtown.