

# Facts all Tow Truck Operators Need to Know



During accident investigations, commercial vehicle brake adjustment may be considered evidence of a crime. Therefore, upon arriving at the scene of an accident involving commercial motor vehicles, do not tamper with the brake adjustment of vehicles equipped with air braking systems!

In a situation where damage to a commercial vehicle has activated the emergency braking system, the proper action is to “cage” the springs located within the spring (emergency) brake chambers.

However, occasions may arise which could require “backing off” the brakes to facilitate the vehicle’s removal from the accident scene. You must receive authorization from the investigating officer prior to taking such action. Unauthorized tampering with commercial vehicle brake adjustment may jeopardize the accident investigation and could possibly be considered as tampering with evidence. Be sure you can defend your actions.

Furthermore, as a matter of state and federal law, you must:

- Apply safety devices such as chains or cables in case of tow bar failure or disconnection. Two of these devices must be connected from the towing vehicle to the towed vehicle. The safety devices must be crossed and attached to the vehicles near the points of bumper attachments to the chassis of the vehicles. The length of the safety devices must be no more than necessary to permit the free turning of the vehicles. [See Title 49, CFR, §393.71(h)(10); [ §393.128].
- Display operable tow lamps on the rear-most portion of the towed vehicle. These tow lamps must consist of side marker lamps, tail lamps, stop lamps, and turn lamps. The practice of activating a towed vehicle’s 4-way flashers in lieu of proper tow lamps is forbidden. [See Title 49, CFR, §393.17(b)].
- Exceptions in emergencies (See Title 49, CFR, §390.23)



Safety Message from Project P.I.E.  
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Note: Georgia intrastate “*for hire*” and “*not for hire*” tow trucks need to register with the Georgia Department of Revenue to receive an Intrastate Motor Carrier Registration. Secondary Moves on disabled, wrecked or replacement vehicles on interstate (across state lines) moves require authority from the Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Administration (202) 358-7107.

CDL endorsements - For information on CDL endorsements required on first and second moves. See Fact Sheet #037.