PURPOSE
The purpose of this standard operating procedure is to establish clear guidelines, policy and procedures governing the provision of assistance to individuals on the roadway, and the criteria for and selection of towing services when for any legal reason the Hazleton Police Department (HPD) or City of Hazleton needs to remove a vehicle from its location to a location of safety or safekeeping, thereby ensuring the free, safe, and efficient movement of vehicles, protection of the public and appropriate enforcement of the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

POLICY
It is the policy of Hazleton Police Department to provide necessary assistance to individuals in need in a timely, efficient, and safe manner. It’s also the policy of the Hazleton Police Department to follow the “Authorized Towing List,” which will consist of (6) authorized towing companies. Vehicles will be towed in accordance with the laws of the Commonwealth in a manner that’s fair and complies with the requirements described herein. It shall be the policy of Hazleton Police Department to utilize the authorized towing companies approved and inspected by the City of Hazleton.

DEFINITIONS
I. For the purpose of this regulation, these phrases shall have the following meaning, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

1. Chief of Police: The Hazleton Police Department Chief of Police
2. Emergency Towing Service: An City of Hazleton authorized provider of road service; vehicle and cargo recovery; and/or towing of light, medium, or heavy vehicles as defined herein; who operates in accordance with the following requirements:
A. Is regularly open for business, receiving of payments, release of vehicles, etc., a minimum of 40 hours, Monday through Friday, between 7:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.

B. Maintains a license to collect sales tax.

C. Uses vehicles to provide service that are properly titled and registered, with the appropriate sales tax paid.

D. Displays business name on vehicles, as required by the Vehicle Code and Title 67.

E. Service vehicles are equipped with the appropriate safety equipment as per PA title 75 and PA title 67 (fire extinguisher, warning devices, etc.), and any other equipment necessary to perform the function; and complies with the Vehicle Code regarding removal of debris.

F. Maintains liability insurance, ensuring compliance with the Vehicle Code and Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations, as appropriate, and garage-keeper's insurance in the amount specified for that classification of towing service.

G. Charges fees that are reasonable and customary for the service provided in the emergency towing service's geographic area. Fees must be posted for public inspection in the place of business of the emergency towing service.

H. Established Place of Business: A single location of an emergency towing service, not a subcontractor or substitute service, equipped with the following: business telephone number published and active, secure storage facility, access to a secure storage lot of their own, and emergency towing vehicles which comply with the requirements for the class of service, as defined herein. The business shall be directly accessible 24 hours a day, by no more than two telephone numbers. The employment of answering services or devices is not considered as making a business “directly accessible.”

I. Heavy-duty Service: An emergency towing service, which possesses the equipment required to perform emergency towing of vehicles weighing in excess of 17,000 pounds including, but not limited to, two heavy duty wreckers. Each required wrecker must have a GVWR of not less than 50,000 pounds and be equipped with a 25-ton winching capability. One wrecker must be equipped with at least a 25,000 pound under-wheel lift. Garage-keeper's insurance in the minimum of $200,000 must be maintained.

J. Medium-duty Service: An emergency towing service which possesses the equipment required to perform emergency towing of multiple vehicles, weighing 7,000 pounds respectively, or less, or vehicles weighing between 7,001 and 17,000 pounds. The equipment shall have a GVWR of not less than 22,000 pounds. Garage-keeper's insurance in the minimum of $150,000 must be maintained.

K. Light-duty Service: An emergency towing service which possesses the equipment required to perform emergency towing of vehicles weighing 7,000 pounds or less including, but not limited to, one conventional wrecker with a GVWR of at least 10,000 pounds and one rollback wrecker with a GVWR of at least 11,000 pounds. The conventional wrecker must be equipped with twin, four-ton winches, or greater, and a 6,000 pound, or greater, under-wheel lift. The rollback must be equipped with an 8,000
L. Recovery Service: A light-, medium-, or heavy-duty towing service which, by virtue of its specialized equipment, experience and training, is capable of removing vehicles and cargo from unique locations. Examples include, but are not limited to, commercial vehicles that have rolled over or are hanging over a bridge, passenger cars at the bottom of a deep ravine, etc. A recovery service must maintain a minimum of $250,000 garage-keeper's insurance.

M. Secure Storage Facility: A indoor facility with at least one thousand (1000) square feet of vehicle parking space that is capable of being locked and prevents general access to vehicle(s) as well as providing cover and protection from exposure to the elements. The facility must have an alarm and video surveillance camera system to notify the owner and police should a break in or attempted break in occur as well as having the potential to capture any criminal element on video.

N. Secure Storage Lot: A location or facility capable of being locked and prevents general access to vehicle(s) therein by means of a barrier at least six feet.

PROCEDURES

II. General

A. The Chief of Police or his/her designee shall review the applications of any Towing Service that makes a request to handle emergency towing calls for the City of Hazleton.

B. The Chief of Police or his/her designee shall provide the names of all qualified Towing Services to Luzerne County 911 to be placed on the Hazleton Emergency Authorized Towing Rotation List and contacted in turn when the need arises for emergency towing. The towing Service Rotation shall address the distribution of service calls within Hazleton Police Department's geographic area of responsibility.

C. The towing rotation is set by the Chief of Police. Currently, the rotation is a two, (2) week rotation starting Sunday at 0000 hours, and running fourteen consecutive days ending at 2359 hours, on Saturday. Luzerne County 911 is responsible for keeping track of what Towing Service is to be called based on the rotation.

D. Quickly restoring the free and safe movement of traffic is essential. Therefore, Hazleton Police Department members shall use their discretionary authority to deny requests for a specific towing service whenever the request will impair the timely restoration of the required traffic movement or the return of department personnel to routine patrol. This same discretionary authority shall supersede this regulation in emergency situations where the police department members deem it necessary to contact a vendor not in rotation with just cause and due reason.

E. Hazleton Police Department members shall follow the procedures listed in the Hazleton Police Department’s Rules and Regulations Manual pertaining to requesting tow services and their use.
F. Luzerne County 911 shall follow the direction of members of the department and this policy when contacting towing services.

G. Authorized towing companies in need of mutual aid assistance can utilize another authorized tower for assistance.

H. When called, the towing service must be readily accessible by phone and respond to a call or page within 10 minutes. The tow service shall arrive on scene without delay in a half hour or less.

III. Application Procedure

A. Towing services interested in being placed on the authorized list to provide towing service and receive service calls must make application to the Hazleton Police Department. The application, and Fee Schedule, can be found in Appendage A.

B. The owner who cannot be convicted of a felony or crime of moral turpitude.

C. Towing services must have an established place of business, secure storage facility and a secure storage lot, as defined in this regulation.

D. Towing services shall indicate on the application all services it intends to provide: Heavy Duty, Medium Duty, Light Duty, or Recovery Service. The service shall be equipped for the service it intends to provide, as described in this regulation.

E. Towing services shall advise the Hazleton Police Department of its fees in accordance with the Fee Schedule, Appendage A. Prior to fees being changed the towing service shall submit a new fee schedule to the Hazleton Police Department.

IV. Suspension or Removal of Towing Service(s)

A. Providing towing services for the City of Hazleton or Hazleton Police Department is an “at will” service (Unless done by a Request for Proposal or Request for Qualifications), bound by the policy and procedures set forth herein and can be changed or modified at any time by the Chief of Police.

B. The Chief of Police shall be authorized to change, modify or utilize any best practice or policy with regard to towing at any time.

C. The Chief of Police shall be authorized to suspend or remove a towing service from the Hazleton Police Department authorized towing list at any time that’s not bound by a Contract with the City of Hazleton through the authorized bid process.

D. Notice of the removal or suspension shall be sent to the established place of business of the towing service.