

5-01/080.10 - Early Release of Impounded Vehicles

Even though a vehicle is lawfully removed under a 30-day impound authority such as 14602.6 (a)(1) CVC, the Department may release a vehicle before the 30-day impound period has elapsed so long as an administrative review is conducted.

The watch commander shall conduct this vehicle release review in a reasonable time period after the R/O appears at the station/unit in person. The vehicle shall be released to the R/O immediately if **all** of the following conditions are met:

- The R/O or legal owner provides proof of ownership and a valid driver license or designates this possession (through consent), in person, to an agent who is in possession of a valid driver license;
- The vehicle has current registration; and
- The R/O pays the vehicle release administrative fee, if applicable. Accrued fees for the impound/storage will be collected by the tow company/garage at the time they release the vehicle.

Note: Valid registration is not required to release the vehicle if requested by a legal owner (L/O) pursuant to 14602.6(f)(1) CVC; however, a station may issue a citation for expired registration at their discretion, pursuant to 22850.3(a) CVC.

In the event the L/O or their designee requests the release of a vehicle, procedures detailed in 14602.6(f) CVC shall be followed which shall require the L/O to provide a letter of assignment as described in section 7500.1(b) of the Business and Professions Code (BPC). This letter is commonly known as a “hold harmless letter.”

Vehicle release reviews involving vehicle impounds based on violations of driving restrictions for DUI cases and/or required IID equipment shall be denied an early release due to statutory 5, 15, or 30-day impound authorities. Such cases include, but are not limited to habitual traffic offenders and DUI cases described in sections 14601.3 CVC, 13352 CVC, and 23575 CVC.
