

Tucson Region

RV parking on streets severely restricted

Tucson ordinance changes have differing effects on cars

By Rob O'Dell

Arizona Daily Star

Tucson, Arizona | Published: 07.05.2007

The rules have changed for Tucson motor home owners who park their vehicles on the street — and for their neighbors who don't like it.

As part of an overhaul of its parking ordinances, the city has banned all but short-term parking of non-passenger vehicles — namely recreational vehicles and boats — on city streets.

The rule, which also applies to commercial vehicles and buses, says those vehicles cannot be parked on the street for any part of two consecutive days. That means if you park it on Saturday night, when you get up Sunday morning you're in violation. The fine for each violation is \$25.

And just moving it up the street or around the corner won't help. Parking anywhere in the same block is the same as not moving the vehicle at all.

Regular passenger vehicles get off only slightly easier. Unless they're parked at the address at which they're registered, they can sit in the same place for only 24 hours — down from 48 hours — before they're subject to citations and possible impoundment.

The ordinances went into effect as soon as the City Council approved them last month — although the city is issuing warnings instead of tickets for six months as people are made aware of the new rules, said Michael Graham, Tucson Department of Transportation spokesman.

The parking ordinance was rewritten to streamline it and make it more accommodating in some areas and more restrictive in others, Graham said.

On the new RV rules, he said, the city was responding to input and complaints given to the citizens commission that oversees parking, as well as gripes received by Parkwise, the city's parking program.

"Parkwise — one of the biggest complaints people have is about RVs," Graham said. "They get one to two complaints a week about RVs."

Graham said many of the complaints come from East Side residents.

"This new ordinance would prohibit RVs' parking on city streets; they would have to park in a driveway or in the backyard," Graham said, adding that the ban also would apply to some enlarged contractor vans.

Glen Parin, president of the South Harrison Neighborhood Association on the East Side, said the RV issue comes up at nearly every association meeting.

"We have our monthly meeting, and usually someone brings up an RV or an abandoned vehicle," Parin said.

Parin said the complaints are either that an RV is parked in front of a resident's house and that creates blind spots, or that the RV is older and unsightly.

Brad Holland, whose neighborhood is near North Swan Road and East Pima Street, gave a different reason for not wanting the motor homes on the street: neighborhood safety.

He said an RV can block the view of the front of a house, allowing a burglar or other intruder to enter without neighbors being able to see.

"At the end of the day, it's about safety," said Holland, a deputy county attorney.

Holland said he can see how some would complain about RVs for aesthetic reasons, but he said that in his neighborhood, that factor takes a back seat to property crimes and shootings. Two have occurred nearby recently, he added.

"It isn't about NIMBYism; it isn't about aesthetics. It *is* about safety," Holland said. "We're just trying to survive here in the Midtown."

He added that RVs parked on the street also could pose a hazard to children, because kids could run out in the street near the vehicles and not be seen by drivers until it's too late.

One person affected by the new rules is Don Tatman, a retired Tucson Police Department officer who now works for Pima County.

The bus-size RV parked in front of his mother's home on East Spring Street must now be moved to a new location after sitting on the street for several years.

Tatman said it will be an inconvenience to him and his mother to find a new parking place for the RV, but he said he will do it because of the change in the ordinance. He didn't know about the change until being contacted by a reporter.

"The law is the law. We obey the law," he said. "Whatever the law says, we'll abide by it."

New rules for parking cars

The ordinance also changes the length of time that cars and trucks can be parked on city streets in the same location.

The past regulations mandated that cars must be moved every 48 hours, but under the new rules, that will be cut in half to 24 hours.

However, there is a major exception to the 24-hour rule for cars that are parked adjacent to the residence where the vehicle is registered. In those cases, the amount of time the car could stay parked in the same place rises to seven days.

Graham said the exception for a car parked in front of the address where it's registered was made to help those who use alternative transportation, including car-pooling.

More time to pay, fight tickets

In addition, the new ordinance increases the amount of time residents have to pay a parking citation or request a hearing to contest one.

The old rule gave seven working days to pay or fight a citation. The new rule gives 30 calendar days to respond or pay. The city also will send a reminder to those cited 15 days into the process.

Graham said the 30-day period gives residents the opportunity to budget to pay their tickets and allows them to avoid late charges as well.

"It's a much more user-friendly ordinance," Graham said.