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## **California Towing and Recovery Trucks Face Regulatory Road Hazard**

Regulations threaten production/sales of tow trucks as inventories are depleted

May 7, 2024 (Sacramento): Today, a coalition of towing and recovery truck manufacturers and drivers called on Governor Gavin Newsom and the California State Legislature to amend the California Vehicle Code to classify their trucks as emergency vehicles.

Due to the California Air Resources Board's (CARB) passage of the [Advanced Clean Truck \(ACT\)](#) regulation, towing and recovery trucks will no longer be assembled or sold in California once new truck inventories are depleted.

While public safety agencies widely view towing and recovery trucks as emergency vehicles, California's Vehicle Code does not. Therefore, CARB's diesel truck engine regulations do not afford them an exemption, such as police, fire, and government-owned towing and recovery vehicles. Since truck and engine manufacturers are not producing custom truck chassis that support the range, performance, and safety standards of tow and recovery trucks, truck body manufacturers have been forced to stop deliveries to California. As trucks on the road reach the end of their service life, they cannot be replaced with electric engine technology that can support tow and recovery trucks. However, they can be replaced by older, higher-emission trucks purchased out-of-state.

“State regulators have created an insurmountable roadblock for towing and recovery truck drivers by mandating electric engine technology that can't yet support custom, high-performance trucks. When our inventory of new trucks is sold, we will be out of business, and fewer tow trucks will be on the road to support stranded motorists,” said Brandon Neal, owner of Truck Body Sales in Sacramento, California. “Ironically, while regulators prohibit towing services from acquiring new, lower-emission chassis assembled in California, the rules allow used, higher-emission trucks to be imported from out-of-state. The result is fewer jobs and higher emissions. At a time when California is facing the country's highest unemployment rate, the governor needs to come up with a solution quickly before small businesses close shop and workers lose jobs.”

[Truck Body Sales](#) is one of many small businesses throughout California that assembles tow trucks by attaching towing and recovery bodies to custom truck chassis (truck cab/frames) produced by major truck manufacturers.

Knowing that truck manufacturers are not developing electric engine alternatives that meet the range, performance, and safety standards for emergency vehicles, CARB exempted emergency vehicles as identified in [California Vehicle Code 165](#). By design or oversight, CARB extended the compliance deadline for government-owned towing and recovery trucks, not privately operated ones. The regulations for privately operated trucks went into effect in January 2024, while government towing/recovery trucks remain exempt.

“When we learned of CARB’s oversight, we accelerated the delivery of truck bodies so that our partners in California could remain in business as long as possible,” said Josh Lovelace, western sales manager for [Miller Industries](#), a major manufacturer of towing and recovery truck bodies. “Since state regulators can’t seem to fix a problem of their own making, we are asking our elected officials in Sacramento to devise a solution that saves the jobs of the workers who assemble and drive these emergency vehicles.”

While electric trucks are not new, truck manufacturers have yet to develop electric alternatives that meet towing and recovery trucks' range, performance, and safety standards. Nor is it a production priority for many manufacturers when few towing and recovery trucks are sold compared to freight and delivery trucks. Current electric truck chassis do not have sufficient space and rail strength for the heavy body, hydraulic equipment, and massive batteries that would be necessary. The batteries cannot sustain the truck during long patrols, which is problematic for rural areas where charging stations are not accessible, nor can they operate the hydraulics over long periods as required during major accident and recovery duties. Having to recall a towing or recovery truck for recharging during an emergency recovery effort could come with life-threatening consequences.

“Governor Newsom and the California State Legislature need to recognize the urgent need to classify all towing and recovery trucks as emergency vehicles,” said Iran Chima of [Chima’s Tow](#), a second-generation Sacramento small business. “This is the only way our drivers can continue to provide emergency and roadside services to millions of California motorists.”

Public safety agencies widely recognize California towing and recovery drivers as emergency service providers. They prioritize motorists' safety by providing reliable roadside assistance 24/7, supporting first responders, and clearing over 1,200 road accidents and 2,400 mechanical breakdowns daily. Their public importance was underscored during the COVID-19 pandemic when Governor Newsom deemed towing and recovery truck workers part of California’s “Essential Critical Infrastructure Workforce.”

The coalition has launched a website where small businesses, truck drivers, and motorists can join a grassroots campaign to urge Governor Newsom and the State Legislature to find a legislative solution before existing inventories of new towing and recovery trucks are depleted. To learn more, visit [www.casaferoads.com](http://www.casaferoads.com).

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