Three Things You Should Know About Toll Violations

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About Bestpass

Bestpass provides a comprehensive payment platform with a focus on nationwide toll management for commercial fleets of all shapes and sizes. Bestpass ensures data accuracy, consolidates payments, delivers invaluable industry expertise, and saves its users time and money. Founded in 2001, Bestpass is now a trusted partner on the road and in the back office for customers, tolling authorities, and related organizations.

Toll Violation Facts

A violation is a toll transaction that is issued by mail because the transponder or license plate that was read on the vehicle cannot be matched to a valid toll account.

Violation is a term used by some toll authorities, while other common terms are toll by mail, plate toll bill or plate toll invoice. Regardless of what they are called, these transactions can have a significant impact on your bottom line.

We will explain three specific facts related to violations – and what you can do about them to help your business.
1. Violations cost money and time
2. Trailers get violations, too
3. Avoiding violations takes work

A diligent and comprehensive approach to toll management requires anticipating violations, acting to minimize their occurrence, and understanding how to handle them when they do occur.

Fact #1: Violations Cost Money and Time

Any truck or other commercial vehicle that operates on tolled roads or bridges is subject to the possibility of violations, which most often come with additional cost and delayed processing time.

Most tolling authorities will seek to identify a vehicle owner first with a viable transponder, then by reviewing license plate capture images and matching the information with license plates on existing accounts. Once all these options are exhausted, if no match is found, the transaction is likely to turn into a violation.

If the toll facility operator is unable to identify a transponder or a license plate on a known account, then it will attempt to reference Department of Motor Vehicle (DMV) records. Once the tolling authority identifies the vehicle owner, it will either post the toll to an active account or issue a plate toll invoice via mail. Either way, an administrative fee will likely be added to the toll amount, resulting in a greater expense than a transponder-based transaction.

In some cases, a tolling authority will have three toll rates: a transponder rate, a toll by plate rate, and finally, a toll by mail rate, with the toll by mail rate being the most expensive. There will also be a delay in receiving the charge due to the additional processing time and effort required by the tolling authority, especially in the case of the mailed paper invoice.

When you have accounts with multiple tolling authorities, these costs can be compounded by having to spend hours or even days every month shuffling invoices and submitting payments through multiple interfaces.
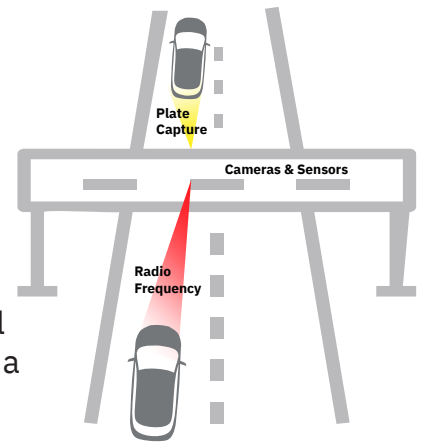
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Fact #2: Trailers Get Violations, Too

Toll violations and paper toll bills occur when a vehicle passes through a toll booth or toll gantry without the transaction being recorded and validated in a standard way.

While many toll facility operators focus on transponders as the primary means for capturing toll transactions, they also often implement a toll by plate system as a backup. As a truck or other vehicle travels through a gantry or other toll reader, the system will not only look for a transponder, but also capture an image of the vehicle's license plate.

Since many gantries and other toll readers will capture the license plate at the rear of the vehicle, it is common for toll by plate transactions to be assessed based on the trailer rather than the tractor. Some tolling authorities will accept trailer license plates on your account, while others will not.

Fact #3: Avoiding Violations Takes Work

The challenges in understanding how violations work are further complicated by differences in policies and procedures between the many toll facility operators throughout the nation. However, there are several key steps that can support a strategy to mitigate violations and make an overall positive impact on your operations and your bottom line.

If you are using toll transponders on a national or regional level, maintaining up-to-date vehicle lists with all tolling authorities, including license plates, is essential to fully cover your vehicles when using tolled facilities. Many tolling authorities require transponders to be associated with vehicle plates when they are activated on the account, but this is not a universal practice.

Whenever you add or replace vehicles, including trailers, it is important to update tolling authorities with license plate numbers and other data to reduce the possibility of violations. Multiple accounts, each with a different vehicle information update process, create added work and increase the possibility of errors.

As a best practice, plan to update new vehicles with all relevant tolling accounts as soon as the new information is available.

Curing Your Headaches with Bestpass

With the rapid adoption of cashless tolling across the country, it is now more important than ever for you to develop an informed toll management strategy, which will in turn help minimize your exposure to violations.

For a viable toll management program, it is vital to compile comprehensive records. This includes existing transponders and associated accounts, license plates for tractors and trailers, and regular travel patterns. It is equally critical to develop a solid understanding of the requirements for how each tolling authority accepts vehicle updates and processes violations.

Whether you take on your own toll management or turn to a third-party provider like Bestpass, it is an important initiative to undertake and, properly executed, can have a significant positive impact on your overall operations, including saving you time and money.