

NEWSBREAK

December 2023 Publication of the Minnesota Professional Towing Association



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**Andrew "Andy" R.
Hovanes**

October 21, 1942 - November 19, 2023

Andrew “Andy” R. Hovanes, 81 who passed away Sunday, November 19, 2023 at the St. Cloud Hospital. Andy was born October 21, 1942 in St. Cloud to Andrew and Mary (Sufka) Hovanes. He was a lifelong resident of Sauk Rapids, a member of Sacred Heart Catholic Church. Andy and his brothers, Jerry and Steve, owned and operated Andy’s Towing in St. Cloud until 2006, he belonged to the Minnesota Towing Association, Wisconsin and Iowa Towing Association, was a member of both TRAA and the St Cloud Metro Lions club and he was proud to be a member in the Towing Hall of Fame. Andy was also a member of the Sauk Rapids Fire Department, from 1963 to 2001. He held many positions there including, Secretary, Captain, second assistant Chief, first assistant Chief and Chief for 12 years. After he retired from the Fire Department, he became a member of Engine Company #2.

Andy is survived by his brothers, Jerry (Joyce) Hovanes of Sauk Rapids, Steve (Karen) Hovanes of Sartell; sisters, Susan Voit of Sauk Rapids and Joanie (Rodney) Determan of Prescott, AZ. He is also survived by nieces and nephews. He is preceded in death by his parents.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS



*IN LOVING
memory*

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LEGAL COUNSEL

Randy Thompson
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952-405-7171

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2886 Middle Street
Little Canada, MN 55117
651-487-2231

OFFICE STAFF

Nikki Steger
2886 Middle Street
Little Canada, MN 55117
651-487-2231

MPTA contact information:

2886 Middle Street
Little Canada, MN 55117

Phone: 651-487-2231
Fax: 651-487-2447

Email: admin@mnprotow.org

**If you would like to make a
contribution to help with the legislative
efforts, please send your donations to:**

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Message From MPTA President, Ron Gardas Jr.



2023 has been a great year for the towing industry in Minnesota. First and foremost, we were safer than in years before. Roadside safety, and safety as a whole, is our number one concern and the leading cause of the tow schools. This years tow schools this year had another year of success and growth. We had our introduction to light duty, 2 day advanced light duty, and intro to heavy duty schools. We even added an Electric Vehicle class. In the last few years, we probably have trained more towers than ever before. In 2024 we plan on continuing that trend. If anyone has any ideas on how to make the schools even better feel free to reach out.

At the capital we have successfully fought off a number of bad bills and even managed to have some get passed in our favor.

In 2023 sadly we have lost a few towers. Towers and industry icons with years and years of experience and knowledge. We can only hope that we can share the knowledge that we have with new generations to help preserve the towing industry. This is another example of why the Minnesota Professional Towing Association Hall of Fame is so important. We need this to remember the people that have paved the way. Remember the stories and accomplishments. I hope that each and every one of you are able to help the Hall of Fame to make sure its there for years and years to come.

The last thing I wanted to touch on is to help one another. I get that we all have competitors, but we all need to do a better job of even getting to know each other. We all do the same job, we all have the same challenges, we all have the same fights. I can honestly say that in my life some of my best friends are my competitors. **THE ONLY PEOPLE THAT CARE ABOUT TOWERS ARE TOWERS!** Lets all try to do a better job of getting to know one another.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year,
Be safe,



Ron Gardas Jr
President - Minnesota Professional Towing Association
Vice President - Heavy Operations
Twin Cities Transport & Recovery



EARNED SICK AND SAFE TIME

Reminder:

Effective Jan. 1, 2024, Minnesota's earned sick and safe time law requires employers to provide paid leave to employees who work in the state. Minnesota's current sick and safe leave law remains in effect until Dec. 31, 2023 and will be replaced by the new earned sick and safe time law on Jan. 1, 2024.

When Minnesota's statewide earned sick and safe time law goes into effect Jan. 1, 2024, employers must follow the most protective law that applies to their employees.

What is sick and safe time?

Sick and safe time is paid leave employers must provide to employees in Minnesota that can be used for certain reasons, including when an employee is sick, to care for a sick family member or to seek assistance if an employee or their family member has experienced domestic abuse, sexual assault or stalking.

How much sick and safe time can employees earn?

An employee earns one hour of sick and safe time for every 30 hours worked and can earn a maximum of 48 hours each year unless the employer agrees to a higher amount.

Effective January 1, 2024, MPTA is sending all members updated labor posters to ensure compliance at the workplace. MSSA members need to also update employee handbooks with the appropriate language as an employee benefit. For more information on ESST, visit: <https://www.dli.mn.gov/sick-leave>

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

— AND —

A HAPPY NEW YEAR



National Move Over Law Resolution Passes in U.S. Senate

TRAA celebrates today's passage of the [Move Over Law Resolution \(S.Res.476\)](#) in the U.S. Senate. The resolution supports the goals and ideals of Move Over Laws and urges relevant Federal and State agencies, as well as nongovernmental organizations involved in traffic incident management response, to promote the existence of and adherence to State Move Over laws.



TRAA is proud of our part in assisting with several of the cosponsors and generating support for the resolution. The passage of S.Res.476 will undoubtedly increase public awareness of Move Over Laws and the need for drivers to slow down and move over when they see any incident responder on the side of the road.

Note, "simple resolutions" are entirely within the prerogative of one chamber or the other. They do not require the approval of the other chamber or signature by the President. An almost identical resolution, [H.Res.1463](#) passed the House last November.

TRAA deeply appreciates the support of every stakeholder who contributed to making the passage of this resolution possible.

TRAA is the industry's watchdog in DC!

Protecting the Salvage Value of Vehicles

By **Brian J Riker**

As a young tower, I clearly remember a local body shop owner giving me hell because I had shoveled a bunch of oil dry into the back seat of what I believed to be a totaled car. Have you thought about the salvage value of the vehicles you are towing away from accident scenes or impounds?

Attention to this detail can increase your direct compensation through billable actions, secondary compensation by increasing the value of the unclaimed vehicles you must auction off each month as well as reduce potential insurance liability claims.

Perhaps the simplest method to accomplish all three of these goals is to apply crash film. I carried these products in my trucks when I was an active tower and strongly recommend you do as well.

Why?

We have a duty to protect the public from hazards; therefore, we must inspect each vehicle before we leave the scene and secure any loose parts. This is easily accomplished by using a crash film that is self-adhesive to simply wrap the loose and damaged parts.

By taking this precaution, you have not only reduced the risk of something loose flying off and injuring someone, but you have also taken the first step in preserving the salvage value of the vehicle.

Everything has a salvage value! Do not fall prey to the thought process of “it’s a total, who cares.” Something as simple as an undamaged, or even slightly damaged, bumper cover can fetch several hundred dollars at a salvage yard.

Think about the interior of the vehicle as well. Don’t be in a hurry and sweep the debris into the interior; rather, use a trash can to hold the oil dry and other trash swept from the roadway. This act can save hundreds, if not thousands in interior cleanup and repair -possibly making the difference between a total loss and a repairable car.

Again, with total value preservation in mind, you need to protect that interior from further damage. This is another opportunity to use a crash film to cover open windows, broken glass or door seals that don’t line up properly. This service has value, and in many areas, it is a billable item. Check your tow service agreement to see if you can invoice for this.

The interior clean-out of the car that I mentioned earlier in this article cost my employer almost \$500. If he had chosen not to pay for my lack of knowledge, the body shop could have stopped using us, made a claim against our insurance or even a complaint to the police agency we towed for. Unlikely, yes, but still a possibility.

Even without a customer involved, protecting the value of unclaimed vehicles will increase your net income from disposal auctions. It may not increase that specific vehicle’s value, but once your company earns a reputation for taking care of all the small details, it will attract a better level of buyer to sales. They will be willing to pay more for each unit, knowing they are getting the best possible value out of each unit.

Lastly, this same reputation for attention to detail will not be overlooked by local collision repair centers and should lead to increased recommendations from the high-quality body shops for your towing services.

TOW INDUSTRY  WEEK

Payment Card Interchange Fee Settlement Opens for Claims

Claim notices began mailing out December 1.



In March, a federal appeals court upheld a \$5.6 billion antitrust class-action settlement consisting of more than 12 million retailers. The claims process is now moving forward as claims forms began mailing on December 1, 2023, and will continue being sent for most of December.

The lawsuit is about the excessive fees merchants had to pay in order to accept Visa and Mastercard cards after the companies violated antitrust laws. With the \$5.54 billion settlement, every merchant in the Rule 23(b)(3) Settlement Class that did not exclude itself from the class by the deadline and filed a valid claim (“Authorized Claimant”) will be paid from the settlement fund. The part of the litigation challenging Visa and Mastercard’s rules and price setting is continuing.

The Rule 23(b)(3) Settlement Class consists of persons, businesses and other entities that have accepted any Visa-branded cards and/or Mastercard-branded cards in the United States at any time from January 1, 2004, to January 25, 2019.

The deadline for merchants to file their claim is May 31, 2024. Once you have received your claim notice, you may file either online or mail your claim to the settlement office.

For more information on the claims process and the settlement visit: www.paymentcardsettlement.com/en That is the official website for the settlement and will include all official court notices relating to the settlement.

MPTA members not receiving a claim form and did not opt out, visit the official website and notify the claims administrator to receive and file a claim form. No organization will receive funds without filing a claim.

In Memoriam of John (Norgaard) Hauser



Earlier this past month our towing community with great sadness and heavy hearts announced the passing of impound lot supervisor at Chiefs Towing, John (Norgaard) Hauser. John worked for Chief's Towing for nearly forty-years, a pillar in the towing industry as John had planned to retire with his wife to his cabin up north later this year.

John touched all our lives with his many stories of his years racing cars and enjoying all forms of motor sports. His family not only included all the employees of Chief's Towing throughout his many years, but also his daughter (Amber) who is following in his foot steps as an impound lot supervisor.

John was very fond of his German shepherds who he also considered family. John had a great sense of humor and would recall many fun stories of fishing trips. John always had time for the loves of his life, his wife, his children and grandkids. John especially enjoyed good cooking and great whiskey always ready for the next party or celebration. - John touched many and will be missed by all.

On Saturday, December 16th, a convoy of rolling lights in celebration of John with a police escort traveled through the city streets in which John has served for almost 4 decades landing at the Knights of Columbus in Bloomington where food & refreshments were provided, sharing stories of our beloved John.

“Heavy-Duty Farewell Offered to Towing Company Titan - Sauk Rapids, industry pay tribute to Hovanes



By Tim Hennagir

Andrew “Andy” Hovanes’ final ride in a towing rig through Sauk Rapids was a memorable one. His casket was carried to its final resting place on the back of a flatbed truck Monday afternoon.

That truck was followed by a long line of big rigs representing towing companies from near and far.

Hovanes, 81, was a lifelong resident of Sauk Rapids and a member of the Sauk Rapids Fire Department from 1963 to 2001. He worked his way through the leadership ranks, serving as chief for 12 years.

Phil Collins, owner of the original Collins Brothers Towing in Elk River, was Hovanes’ lifelong friend and industry colleague.

Collins drove Hovanes to Sacred Heart Catholic Church’s cemetery for interment.

“When someone who owns or works for a towing company dies, the funeral arrangements are a lot like a firefighter’s,” Collins said. “When someone passes away in our industry, the news really travels fast.”

Andy and his brothers, Jerry and Steve, owned and operated Andy’s Towing in St. Cloud until 2006. Steve Hovanes estimated 125 heavy and light tow trucks were parked near Sacred Heart Nov. 27 prior to departing for a funeral procession.

“His life was towing,” Steve said. “All three of us were dedicated to the company, but Andy started pumping gas when he was 10 years old, and when he was 15 years old, he was driving a wrecker.”



(continued on next page)

The Hovanes family owned two Standard Oil gas stations in Sauk Rapids on U.S. Highway 10 before it was re-named Benton Drive, Steve said.

When the stations closed, the family bought a lot in St. Cloud and relocated.

“That’s where we had our first towing office,” he said. “From there, we grew. My dad, Andrew, started the business, and we grew the business to 38 trucks at the time we sold out in 2006. My brother helped organize many, many tow schools. You don’t go to college for this job. You go into the ditch and learn.”

Lance Klatt, executive director of the Minnesota Professional Towing Association, arrived early Monday prior to Hovanes’ morning burial mass at Sacred Heart.

Hovanes was one of the association’s founding members and a member of towing associations in Wisconsin and Iowa as well as a Towing Hall of Fame member.

His community service included membership in the St. Cloud Metro Lions Club.

Klatt met with a number of towing company representatives Nov. 27 at the Copper Kitchen in St. Cloud before driving to the church.

“Our industry is community-driven,” Klatt said. “We help people in their time of need. If everybody gave back to their community like Andy Hovanes did during his lifetime, we would all be better off right now.”

Collins reinforced that sentiment. He’s been in the industry 44 years and owned his company 27 years.

“If you haven’t been around the towing business, you don’t know what it’s like,” Collins said. “Towing companies take care of each other. Andy would always take a call. He would attend industry picnics and birthday parties of other companies’ employees. He took an interest and cared about the entire family.”

Hovanes stood by the people he knew during the worst of times and the best of times, Collins recalled.

“We’ll never know everything Andy did for the St. Cloud and Sauk Rapids area,” Collins said. “He donated a lot of time and money, especially to the Sauk Rapids Fire Department. He wasn’t one to talk or brag.”

Sauk Rapids residents Spencer Buerkle and Kirk Abraham worked with Hovanes through their long association with the Sauk Rapids Fire Department, its relief association and Engine Company No. 2 –a group of retired firefighters who undertook the painstaking restoration of the city’s first fire truck.

Buerkle served on the department for 32 years (1970-2012) and was the Sauk Rapids Fire Department Relief Association’s treasurer for 25 years and its president.

Abraham worked for the city of Sauk Rapids for 42.5 years and served on the fire department for 25 years (1983-2008).



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“Andy always worked for the betterment of the department and the city’s overall interest,” Abraham said. “He was always fair with everyone and treated them with plenty of respect. He helped everybody.”

Fire departments and towing companies have a tight and unique relationship, Buerkle said.

When someone joins a volunteer fire department, they join a family that stays with them for a long time.

“When Andy was chief, you could always tell who was in charge at a fire scene,” Buerkle said. “There was no doubt in anyone’s mind, and leadership was one of the traits he developed running the towing business and being involved in so many organizations. That was always respected by our firefighters.”





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Trucking Industry Reporting Rise in Predatory Towing



Published: Tuesday, December 12, 2023

A recent report by the American Transportation Research Institute indicates trucking companies are seeing more predatory practices and instances of excessive towing rates, according to a release by the Arkansas Trucking Association. Information for the report included a survey, distributed through the American Transportation Research Institute's contact database and industry news outlets. The survey generated a convenience sample of 350 motor carrier respondents, according to the report. The group also obtained 490 complete invoices from various sources.

"Predatory towing has received increased attention from the trucking industry in recent years, as non-consensual tows often create costly consequences for motor carriers and insurance companies as well as negative impacts to supply chains," the report said. "Because most heavy-duty truck crash scenarios are unique, they present trucking and T&R stakeholders a series of complex tasks, decisions, regulations and interactions that can easily enable predatory practices."

The report notes the two most common forms of predatory towing are excessive rates and unwarranted extra service charges. According to the report, 82.7% of motor carriers experienced excessive rates and 81.8% received unwarranted additional charges.

Tim Moody, the president of the Arkansas Professional Towing and Recovery Association--which represents 761 towing companies in the state,--said that in Arkansas there is no legislation dictating how much can be charged for a tow, as long as the fee is reasonable. He said nonconsensual tows typically involve accidents where the requirements are extremely variable and cleanup times and costs can be extensive.

He said in instances when trucking companies feel the fees they've been charged are excessive, they have a remedy through the Arkansas Towing and Recovery Board -- an arm of the state that is not associated with the Arkansas Professional Towing and Recovery Association. The Arkansas Towing and Recovery Board is the state's primary enforcement and investigative body charged with ensuring compliance with the state's statutes and rules and the disposition of consumer complaints, according to its website.

Source: nwaonline.com

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Anoka	North Star Towing 763-427-4160	Dayton	Radke Wheel Service 507-763-3129	Marshall	Pulver Towing 507-828-5720
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Bloomington	Bobby & Steve's Auto World 952-831-8833	Hamel	Dan's Towing 654-464-5551		Ed's Towing Service 218-233-7740
	Bobby & Steve's Auto World West Bloomington 952-881-1024	Inver Grove Heights	Twin Cities Transport & Recovery, Inc 651-642-1446	Motley	Collins Brothers Towing Of Motley 320-257-5525
	Chief's Towing, Inc. 952-888-2201	Ironton	Feist Automotive 763-544-5512	Mountain Iron	Iron Range Towing and Automotive 218-780-1726
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Brainerd	Collins Brothers Towing Of St. Cloud, 218-822-5525	Kasson	MN Towing and Repair 612-326-6687		Statewide Towing 651-633-4262
Burnsville	Captain Towing 952-856-2901	Lakeville	South East Towing 651-451-9721	Newport	Absolute Towing & Recovery 651-337-2149
Cannon Falls	Siewert's Towing 507-263-4791	Little Falls	AutoSmith Service Group 1-218-545-5715	North Branch	PLC Recovery 651-247-9783
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Columbia Heights	Bobby & Steve's Auto World 952-944-1690		Marek's Towing & Repair 952-469-3182		Sweet Towing & Repair 507-451-3424

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Frankies Towing Co
763-595-0321

Ramsey
Nicety Towing
763-245-2619

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507-282-3851

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Savage
Allen's Service Inc.
952-894-1000

Scanlon
Blaine Brothers
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Shafer
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Spring Lake Park
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UPCOMING EVENTS

MPTA Board Meeting

February 20, 2024

Dinner: 6:00 pm

Meeting: 6:30 pm

MPTA Office
Little Canada, MN

Holiday Season

Office Hours



Closed Monday, December 25th, 2023

Closed Monday, January 1st, 2024



CHRISTMAS FUN FACTS



Stockings origin: The tradition of hanging stockings comes from a legend that Saint Nicolas secretly dropped coins in the stockings of three poor sisters. Now, children around the world hang stockings hoping to find them filled with treats and gifts on Christmas morning.

Christmas Trees: The Christmas tree tradition began in Germany during the 16th century. Early trees were decorated with fruits, nuts, and paper flowers.

Festive Poinsettias: Originally from Mexico, these vibrant red and green plants became associated with Christmas because of their festive colors. They're named after Joel Poinsett, who brought them to America in the 1820's.