



Diane Rietman/Journal staff

Kelly McCabe, a parking-enforcement officer, places a warning sticker on the driver's side window of a car that was just booted. The warning lets the driver know the fine now due to the city. It also explains that the car could be damaged if it is moved with the boot attached to the wheel.

# Parking officers do more than write tickets

By Diane Rietman  
Journal Staff Writer

There is more to the job of being a parking-enforcement officer than putting tickets on cars.

Often, they are first responders to downtown accidents or medical emergencies. They direct traffic when needed for funerals and other events.

"Often, they are the eyes and ears of the police department and provide information if we're looking for someone," Rapid City Police Lt. Dick Gilbert said.

It's not the easiest job, either. They work in snow, rain and extreme heat.

People who aren't happy about getting a ticket harass them. Sometimes, they are threatened.

One parking officer informed a man he couldn't drive away because he had more than five unpaid parking tickets and that the car was about to be booted. To keep him from leaving, she stood behind the car. The driver almost ran her over. Joyann Kistler, a parking-enforcement officer for Rapid City, said.

"We're public officers and have the authority to say they can't move a car," Kistler said.

If you have five unpaid parking tickets, you're placed on the boot list, updated daily.

A car left with a boot for more than 48 hours is towed.

Violations can be expensive. The \$5 parking fines increase to \$10 after 72 hours. For a booted car, that means \$50 in parking fines and another \$50 for the boot fine. Add to that the \$35 to \$50 towing fee.

Parking-enforcement officers work two shifts — 7 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. and 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

"People in Rapid City think being pulled over and given a citation for speeding is OK, but when you give them a \$5 parking ticket, they have a cow,"



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Joyann Kistler demonstrates how to apply a boot to a car.

Kistler said. "When you tell someone from out of town it's a \$5 ticket, they don't think it's that bad."

More than half of the city's parking tickets are issued to downtown employees, Kistler said.

"There's probably not enough long-term parking, but that doesn't give people the right to not abide by the parking ordinances," she said. "The problem is that businesses don't provide employee parking, and workers don't want to walk. They end up doing the two-hour parking shuffle, and they're not always successful at it."

Officers often change their marking schedule so motorists don't get used to their routine.

"We'll start at Fifth or Sixth street, and mark the front tires on one block and the back tires on another," Fleck said. Some business owners and downtown employees watch for the parking staff, and then run out to move their cars.

"There comes a point where you recognize people's moving patterns, and you can figure out where they work," Candy Fleck, a parking-enforcement officer, said.

And if the enforcement staff can figure out the patterns of

downtown workers, it is a sure bet the workers can figure out the pattern of the enforcement staff.

"When we've changed the route, we actually have people who say we're late or early or somehow off our schedule," Kistler said. "People who do the two-hour shuffle know they are on a schedule and that we also follow a schedule. No matter where we start marking vehicles, it's still the responsibility of the driver to be back at their car in two hours to move it."

And a car shuffler can't avoid a ticket by simply moving his vehicle a few spaces from the original parking spot. He must move the car at least a block away.

Parking-enforcement officers keep notes on where cars have been ticketed and the time they reach certain blocks. They synchronize their watches with police dispatch so all city law enforcement is consistent and so they don't ticket a car before the two hours are really up.

People have suggested giving visitors from other towns or other states a break.

"We can't give preferential treatment," Fleck said. "We're just trying to do our job."