

Some parking violators get booted into action

Diane Grant
Staff Writer

When Rapid City's chronic parking violators are given the boot, their problems become more than financial.

Police officers may attach a mechanical boot to the front wheel of a car owned by anyone with 10 or more outstanding parking tickets. The boot prevents the wheel from turning.

This boot is removed only when the violator has paid his parking fines and a \$35 boot fee. If the boot remains on for more than 48 hours, the car is towed. The towing fee then is added to the violator's debts.

The boot procedure, first implemented in July 1985, has proven effective in dealing with repeated parking violators.

"People are scared to have the boot on," said Lt. Richard Gilbert, traffic commander for the Rapid City Police Department. "A lot of people have been paying their fines so it doesn't go on."

A parking ticket is \$2. After 72 hours the fine is raised to \$7. A notice is sent to the violator when the fine increases, said Linda Jensen, city cashier.

Unpaid parking tickets are recorded. A registered letter is mailed to the violator when the number of outstanding parking tickets reaches 10.

"Sometime we can't send a letter because (the violator) has no registered address," said Gilbert. "Then, if we find the car, (by license number) we put a sticker on it, indicating that the person has 10 days to pay his fines or the car will be

booted next time it is spotted."

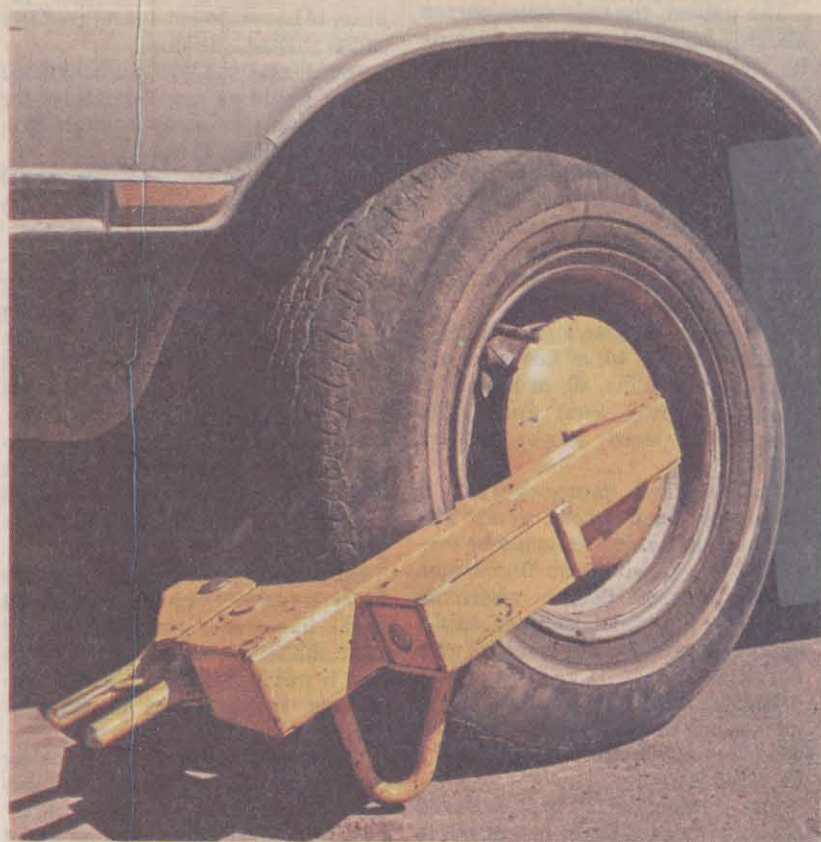
Only a police officer may boot an automobile. If a car is spotted by a parking meter attendant, a call is made to the department. A police officer fetches one of three boots kept at the police department, and boots the car.

Use of the boot is "sporadic," Gilbert said. "Three or four times a month is the average. We may have four or five one month and then go a month without any."

The City Finance Office handles the fine collections.

"The cars don't go any place until city hall tells us to release them," said Gilbert. "People get a little irate about it, but usually they wind up going down to city hall to get their fines taken care of."

"Most of (the violators) are well aware they're on the list."



This car isn't going anywhere with a boot on it. (Staff photo by Steve McEnroe)