

## Parking Agent Hogs Handicapped Spot, Gets Sacked

By [Beth Greenfield](#)

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He was supposed to dole out tickets and make sure drivers were sticking to parking rules. But instead, one Houston parking enforcement agent broke the rules he was meant to enforce, getting [fired](#) this week after parking illegally in a handicapped spot and cursing at the fed-up civilian who filmed him in action.

“Like with any organization, there are some hires that work out and some that don’t,” Christopher Newport, deputy director of city parking management for Houston tells Yahoo Shine, confirming on Wednesday that the agent in question had been let go “as of yesterday morning.” And it was not his choice of parking spots that was the worst offense, Newport adds, but “his response,” which included the use of an expletive, despite knowing he was being filmed at the time. “If that’s how you make decisions, I don’t think we want you working for us,” says Newport.

Brian Moya, head of an online real estate company, filmed the unnamed parking agent pulling his city vehicle out of the spot and immediately uploaded the video to [YouTube](#). He then called Newport’s office to log an official complaint.

“It makes me feel disgusted when people park in those spaces and they’re not even handicapped,” Moya tells Yahoo Shine. He said his anger was partly on behalf of his father, disabled due to chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and his late mother, who was also disabled. “I’m not surprised by the response from the city,” he adds. “I wanted him fired. But he should’ve also gotten the \$500 fine that anyone else would have gotten.”

Newport praised Moya’s reporting of the incident, saying “The city wants to know when there are violations going on,” and that the video was helpful; he even offered Moya an opportunity to volunteer for the city’s Volunteer Enforcement Program, which targets disabled parking abusers, which Moya declined. But Newport also says that Moya “was a little bit more confrontational than I’d suggest” in his filming technique. (In the video, shot at close range, Moya can be heard taunting the agent with calls of, “Say hello! In the handicapped spot! Say hello! In the

handicapped spot!”)

Moya is not the first to publicly shame a law enforcer about minor parking violations. Earlier this year, a [12-year-old boy](#) filmed his confrontation with a police officer who had parked his motorcycle in the middle of the sidewalk in order to duck into a store to buy a soda. The boy asked for the cop’s badge number, which he refused to provide before driving off. In [Seattle](#), an Iraq War vet snapped a photo of a cop car that was taking up a handicapped spot that the vet needed, which led to a public apology by the police force — just as it did in [Louisiana](#), when a photo of a police car parked in a disabled spot at a local restaurant was uploaded to Facebook.

Police officers — as well as parking and traffic officials, who are typically civilians in uniform and not actually cops — are given discretion when it comes to parking and traffic laws, based on the situation and municipality. Still, non-emergency violations can be disruptive.

“Is it often a minor and petty abuse of power? Yes. Are they helping law enforcement? Probably not,” Steve Silverman, executive director of the civil liberties non-profit [Flex Your Rights](#) tells Yahoo Shine.

Tim Lynch, a lawyer and police misconduct expert who directs the [Cato Institute](#)’s Project on Criminal Justice, agrees. “We should hold the police to high standards of ethics and conduct,” he wrote Yahoo Shine in an email. “That means we should expect men and women in law enforcement to resist power-abusing temptations. If police break some rules without consequence, it will have a corrupting effect on their conduct over time.”

So how to avoid feeling intimidated and best handle a law enforcer who acts above the law?

“Many people make the mistake of complaining directly to the officer(s) they think are engaging in misconduct. That is usually a complete waste of time,” according to Lynch. “Using smartphone photography on the scene, if possible, can be very effective because it can be strong evidence to back up claims. Another way of overcoming intimidation is to make an effort to identify other witnesses on the scene. Having disinterested bystanders support a claim of misconduct can be very helpful.”

Openly recording any incidents, like Moya did, is also a good approach — and something every citizen has a first-amendment right to do, Silverman adds. But he stressed that it’s important to stand back, remain calm, and be ready to assert your civil rights. He’s written an article about the guidelines [here](#).

Finally, Lynch notes, “One should seek legal advice from an attorney for the more serious cases that involve personal injuries, property damage, or vicious abuse.” In other cases, he advises contacting the police chief, local representatives, and news outlets.

As for the situation in Houston, Newport says he understands that parking situations can get particularly emotional, and he welcomes comments and complaints. “Parking citations are complicated,” he explains. “They cause emotion to come to the fore.”