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City testing new technology that could eventually give boots the boot

Charleston, S.C.--For years, cities and citizens alike have struggled with traditional parking-enforcement boots, which are used to immobilize vehicles due to excessive unpaid parking tickets.

Starting Monday, May 9, 2022, City of Charleston Parking officers will begin a pilot program using the "Barnacle," an alternative product that promises to reduce employee injuries and vehicle damage while offering citizens faster and more convenient ways to get their cars back on the road.

The Barnacle is a large yellow clamp that is affixed to a vehicle's windshield with powerful suction cups, blocking a driver's ability to see out of their windshield. The device is GPS monitored, so an alarm will sound if a person attempts to move their vehicle while it is in place.

During the pilot period, a small number of vehicles will be "Barnacled" instead of booted, and if the test is successful, the city will consider switching over to the new product.

While parking boots are heavy and difficult to install and uninstall, which sometimes leads to injuries and damage to vehicle rims, the Barnacle is much lighter, easier to apply and is not expected to cause any damage to the vehicle. Additionally, payments to remove the Barnacle can be made via phone by credit card anytime, day or night. Once the fees and any outstanding parking tickets are paid, parking enforcement will enter a code on the device, which will release the suction and the device will be removed.

As with parking boots, there is an additional \$500 fee for tampering with the Barnacle or attempting to remove it from a vehicle.

City of Charleston director of Traffic and Transportation Robbie Somerville said, "As much as we don't like doing it, it's sometimes necessary to immobilize a vehicle. It's our hope that this new technology will eventually make that process more efficient, and hopefully a little less painful, for everyone involved."

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