



hook & winch

FROM THE DESK OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SUE MILES

Grow, Connect, and Strengthen through ITWA

As we head into spring, activity across the towing industry begins to pick up — and so do the opportunities for our members to grow, connect, and strengthen their businesses through ITWA.

One of the things we are most excited about this season is our upcoming **Light & Medium Duty Driver Training taking place May 9th and 10th in Indianapolis**. Training is one of the most important investments we can make in our industry. It improves safety, strengthens professionalism, and gives drivers the knowledge and confidence they need to safely handle the challenges they face every day on the road.

This year's training is being generously hosted by **Paddack's Towing**, and we would like to extend a special thank you to **Jeff Ripley, Jacob Ripley, and Daryn Milton** for hosting the event and providing the vehicles used as training casualties for the class. Their support plays a vital role in making hands-on training possible for our drivers.

Events like this would not be possible without the support of our industry partners. We would also like to thank our training sponsors: **Indiana Lien, Auto Data Direct, Shepherd Insurance, and AAA Hoosier Motor Club** for helping make this training possible.

Sadly, March has also reminded us of the risks our operators face every day. ITWA recently made the **first Survivor Fund payment to the family of Thomas O'Quinn**, who tragically lost his life while working in the line of duty. On behalf of the entire association, **ITWA offers our sincerest thoughts and prayers to his wife Stephanie and their family during this incredibly difficult time**. Situations like this remind us why the Survivor Fund exists and why it is such an important benefit for our members.

Continued on page 3



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Advertisers needed for 2026 Newsletters:

If you're interested in reaching all of our members during 2026 by advertising in our newsletter, just call Sue Miles at 765-288-6041.

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We would also like to remind company owners about the importance of keeping your **Accidental Death Insurance forms up to date and on file with the association**. This benefit is designed to help protect members and their families in the event of a tragedy, but proper documentation must be completed in order for coverage to apply. If you have not submitted your form yet, please take a few minutes to download it from the Members Only section of our website and return it to the ITWA office.

In addition, we strongly encourage members to **enroll their drivers as employee members**. For a very small cost, employee members become eligible for important benefits including the accidental death coverage and participation in the Survivor Fund program. Protecting the drivers who work beside us every day should be a priority for every towing company.

There are also several important industry updates included in this month's newsletter. Members will find **legislative updates impacting Indiana towers**, as well as an important **legal victory for the towing industry discussed in this month's legal column by Ryan Leagre**. These updates highlight the importance of having a strong association advocating on behalf of towing professionals across the state.

Looking ahead to summer, planning is well underway for the **ITWA Tow Show taking place July 31st through August 2nd at Fair Oaks Farms**. We are excited to bring this event back to such a unique venue and look forward to a great weekend of networking, vendors, education, and fellowship within the Indiana towing community.

ITWA continues to focus on providing value to our members through training, advocacy, and programs that support the men and women working in the towing industry. Thank you for your continued support of the association and for the work you do every day keeping Indiana's roads safe.

We look forward to seeing many of you at our upcoming events.


Sue

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Our members are the backbone of this association. From large recovery operations to small family-run businesses, ITWA represents professionals who work long hours in challenging conditions to keep Indiana's roads clear and safe.

***If you would like your company featured in an upcoming newsletter,
contact us!***

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ZIP'S TRUCK EQUIPMENT

FROM THE DESK OF PRESIDENT BILL McCLANAHAN

Hello you all! Hope and pray that all is well. Winter is about to go away, glad of that.

I wanted to let you know that we lost a couple of drivers in the state of Indiana this month. Not a good thing ever. Please keep their family's and companies in your prayers.

Please see about making your drivers ITWA Employee members and let them know what we can do for them!

We have many things going on this year, Trade Show and Driver training coming up in May, get them signed up. Remember, Training helps them stay safe!

I want to thank everybody for the help getting things moving in the right direction. Lets make ITWA great again! LOL, little copy cat. Sue and Ken are awesome help, what a team we have!

God Bless and Stay Safe,

Bill

ATRI 2-DAY LIGHT & MEDIUM DUTY TRAINING

May 9–10, 2026
Indianapolis

We are excited to host an intensive two-day Light & Medium Duty Driver Training presented by ATRI. This class is designed to sharpen real-world skills, improve safety, and strengthen professionalism in the field.

Why attend?

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MAY 10TH, 2026
LIGHT & MEDIUM DUTY CERTIFICATION
9:00 AM – 4:00 PM

CLASS PRICING

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INSTRUCTORS: JT REASOR & JUSTIN THOMAS

ABOUT THE AMERICAN TOWING & RECOVERY INSTITUTE (ATRI)

The American Towing & Recovery Institute (ATRI), based in Missouri, is dedicated to advancing the towing and recovery industry through hands-on training, real-world experience, and forward-thinking education.

- ATRI delivers industry-leading programs for towing and recovery companies, equipment distributors, towing associations, Departments of Transportation, municipalities, fire and rescue agencies, and military installations nationwide.
- ATRI develops specialized awareness-level training to help first responders safely manage incidents involving electric, hybrid, natural gas, and hydrogen-powered vehicles.



register online at <https://towingindiana.com>

QUESTIONS? CALL 765-393-6012

ITWA WOMEN'S AUXILIARY

The mission of the Women's Auxiliary is to provide financial aid and support for ITWA through various events and fundraisers. We provide and promote fellowship opportunities, also assisting in safety awareness for the members. We have promoted and assisted with the annual Tow Show and Christmas Party. We have also hosted fundraisers for the Allen Hercamp Scholarship Fund and the Sonny Henline Survivor Fund.

ITWA Women's Auxiliary is continually looking for women who can assist, introduce new ideas, and support our current programs. If you have any questions or are interested in joining, please contact Crystal Rose at 219-712-4894 or email crystalrose@netnitco.net

We would love to have you join us!

Until Next Time Stay Safe,

Crystal



DOT UPDATE FROM ISP MASTER TROOPER BRENT HOOVER



*October marked my 21st year with the ISP. I am assigned to the Commercial Vehicle Enforcement Division or CVED for s My name is **Brent Hoover**. I am a Master Trooper with the Indiana State Police.*

My primary daily duties is to enforce the State and Federal Regulations as well as Size and Weight enforcement for CMV's in the State of Indiana. I am certified to complete Part A and B Inspections as well as General Haz-mat and Cargo Tank inspections, Passenger Vehicle Inspections, Performance Base Brake Test and Portable Scale Service Tech. I am also a Part B Instructor for the National Training Center, which means I teach new inspectors on how to inspect and Document Level 1 inspections. I am a Certified Master Instructor through the National Training Center. I have competed twice in the North American Inspectors Championships. I am the current administrator of the CVED Facebook page where I post about tips and tricks to improve your pre-trip inspections and to avoid common roadside violations.

This week I would like to write about a stop I made last week. I stopped a tow truck towing a semi-tractor backwards and only had the 4-way flashers activated.



I want to remind you that in FMCSRs 393.9 and 393.11 that a working set of tail, turn and brake lights must be always displayed on the towed vehicles.

Not only is not having these lights a safety concern for you but those that are following you and your tow truck, but it is an Out of Service violation as well. I would hate for someone to rear end you coming to a stop or turning, and it was because you failed to have the required lights. So please take a minute and make sure that your added lights are used and function properly.

If you have any other questions, please feel free to contact me.

Brent N. Hoover, Master Trooper

Email: bhoover@isp.in.gov



FIRST RECEIPT OF THE ITWA SURVIVOR FUND

Thomas “Tommy” Roy O’Quinn, 38, of Ashley, Indiana died unexpectedly as the result of a work accident on Thursday, March 5, 2026, in Angola.

He was born April 18, 1987, in LaGrange to Jimmy D. and Leann M. (Witham) O’Quinn. They preceded him in death.

On April 16, 2016, at the Steuben County Fairgrounds in Angola he married Stephanie Baker.

Tommy worked for First Call Towing and Express Truck Repair in Fremont. He was also a volunteer fireman for the Ashley-Hudson Fire Department.

He was a firefighter in every sense of the word—steadfast, selfless, and deeply committed to the calling that shaped his entire life. The firehouse wasn’t just where he worked; it was where he found purpose, brotherhood, and the chance to serve his community with courage day after day. He carried that sense of duty with him everywhere, always ready to help, always the first to step forward when someone needed him.

Beyond the uniform, he had a quieter side that came alive in the outdoors. Waterfowl hunting was more than a pastime for him—it was a place of peace, reflection, and connection to the natural world. Whether standing in the early morning stillness or watching the sun rise over the lake, he found a kind of calm there that balanced the intensity of his work. Those moments, surrounded by the sounds of nature, were some of his happiest.

He lived a life defined by service, passion, and the simple joys that grounded him. His dedication, his love for the outdoors, and the way he poured himself into everything he cared about will be remembered by all who knew him.



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LET US DO THE PAPERWORK SO YOU CAN FOCUS ON THE TOWING

Indiana House Bill 1184 Signed Into Law

Indiana Governor Eric Holcomb recently signed Indiana House Bill 1184 into law. The bill includes several provisions that impact towing operations across the state, particularly regarding private property towing, payment requirements, and access for tow operators responding to emergencies.

Credit Card Payment Requirement

One of the most significant changes for towing companies is a new requirement related to payment methods.

Under the new law, towing companies **must accept credit cards as a form of payment for vehicle release**. Operators may charge a processing fee for credit card transactions; however, **the fee is capped at 3 percent of the total charge**.

This provision was intended to ensure vehicle owners have a reliable way to pay and retrieve their vehicles without delays due to payment limitations.

Private Property Tow-Away Zone Signage

The law also establishes specific standards for **tow-away zone signage on private property**.

For a vehicle to be legally towed from a private lot, the tow-away zone sign must meet certain requirements, including being **posted between five (5) and seven (7) feet above the ground** and clearly identifying the property as a tow-away zone.

If signage does not meet the statutory requirements, the legality of the tow could be challenged.

Emergency Response Access

HB 1184 also clarifies that **tow trucks responding to emergency calls may use the shoulder of the roadway when necessary** to reach the scene of a crash or disabled vehicle. This provision helps ensure tow operators can access incident scenes more quickly and safely.

What This Means for Towing Companies

These updates represent important operational changes for many towing businesses in Indiana. Companies should review their procedures to ensure compliance with the new requirements, particularly regarding **credit card acceptance and signage verification for private property towing**.

The Indiana Towing and Wrecker Association will continue monitoring legislative developments and working with policymakers to represent the interests of Indiana's towing professionals.

ITWA WELCOMES NEW ASSOCIATE MEMBER – EVOLV!

About Evolv

Based in Newburgh, Indiana and founded in 1998, Evolv partners with associations like ITWA to deliver practical business solutions that help towing companies grow and operate more efficiently. Recognized on the Inc. 5000 Fastest Growing Companies list for Payment Processing and Digital Marketing, Evolv focuses on three core goals: lowering costs, increasing sales, and reducing risk.

What Evolv Offers:

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517.266.6957**

ACTION REQUIRED

ITWA Accidental Death Insurance Form

Dear ITWA Members,

As a reminder, **all ITWA member company owners are automatically eligible for coverage under the ITWA Accidental Death Insurance policy.** This benefit is provided as part of your membership, but **we must have a completed insurance form on file for you.**

We are asking every member owner to please take a moment to:

1. Visit the ITWA website: **www.towingindiana.com**
2. Go to the **Members Only** section
3. **Download the Accidental Death Insurance Form**
4. **Complete the form and return it to Sue as soon as possible**

If we **do not have your completed form on file**, it could **exclude you from coverage if something were to happen.**

Please note:

- This policy is **Accidental Death Insurance only**
- Coverage applies **anywhere you are**, not just while working
- It covers you while operating a **company vehicle or a personal vehicle**

This benefit is an important part of ITWA's commitment to protecting our members and their families, so we strongly encourage you to complete and submit the form promptly.

If you have any questions or need assistance, please feel free to contact me.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Sue Miles

Executive Director

Indiana Towing and Wrecker Association

765-393-6012

director@towingindiana.com

www.towingindiana.com

MARCH COMPLIANCE UPDATE

By Brian J. Riker



Brian J. Riker is the President and Chief Compliance Specialist at Fleet Compliance Solutions, a nationwide motor carrier safety and compliance consulting firm that specializes in non-traditional fleets such as towing and auto transport companies. With more than 30 years' experience as a tower and auto transport company owner, Brian blends real world experience with professional knowledge of the regulations and best practices to help towers stay safe, stay compliant and thrive in business.

What is a Qualified Driver?

Without getting political, there are many ill-informed individuals in the transportation space distributing false, misleading or downright terrible advice or information. One thing is crystal clear, all the controversy surrounding non-domiciled CDLs has brought to light the lack of basic understanding of Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration regulations surrounding driver qualifications. Let's clear up a few of these fallacies.

While states retain the right to set qualification standards for operation of commercial motor vehicles for intrastate commerce that may be less stringent than the federal regulations, including minimum age, medical certifications, English language proficiency and more, almost every tower in America engages in interstate commerce at least once a day, making them subject to the often-stricter federal standards.

Keep in mind, to engage in interstate commerce the truck, or driver, doesn't necessarily need to cross a state or international border, only the freight (in our case most often a vehicle) needs to have come from, or be going back, out of state. The intent of the movement determines if interstate regulations are applicable.

Sure, wrecked and disabled vehicles may be exempt from federal regulations when being transported from the primary point of disablement, but how many towers exclusively move wrecked or disabled motor vehicles? So much of a towing company's work is anything but primary movement of wrecked or disabled motor vehicles.

49 CFR 391.11 details the basic qualifications for an operator of a commercial motor vehicle (CMV), as below. Keep in mind, under federal rules a CMV is any vehicle with a gross weight rating greater than 10,000 pounds when used in furtherance of interstate commerce. This will include most ¾ ton and up pickup trucks, all modern light duty wreckers and much more.

§ 391.11 General qualifications of drivers.

(a) A person shall not drive a commercial motor vehicle unless he/she is qualified to drive a commercial

motor vehicle. Except as provided in § 391.63, a motor carrier shall not require or permit a person to drive a commercial motor vehicle unless that person is qualified to drive a commercial motor vehicle.

(b) Except as provided in subpart G of this part, a person is qualified to drive a motor vehicle if he/she—

- (1) Is at least 21 years old;
- (2) Can read and speak the English language sufficiently to converse with the general public, to understand highway traffic signs and signals in the English language, to respond to official inquiries, and to make entries on reports and records;
- (3) Can, by reason of experience, training, or both, safely operate the type of commercial motor vehicle he/she drives;
- (4) Is physically qualified to drive a commercial motor vehicle in accordance with subpart E—Physical Qualifications and Examinations of this part;
- (5) Has a currently valid commercial motor vehicle operator's license issued only by one State or jurisdiction;
- (6) Is not disqualified to drive a commercial motor vehicle under the rules in § 391.15; and
- (7) Has successfully completed a driver's road test and has been issued a certificate of driver's road test in accordance with § 391.31, or has presented an operator's license or a certificate of road test which the motor carrier that employs him/her has accepted as equivalent to a road test in accordance with § 391.33.

As you can see there are seven minimum qualifications, with the most often ignored being (2), (3) and (4). Keep in mind, this is for ALL commercial drivers, not just CDL drivers.

English language proficiency is a very hot topic today, and it does not mean you need college level English skills. No, all a driver needs to do is have a basic grasp of the language so they can converse with law enforcement, understand temporary traffic control and road signs and explain their cargo to the public. Nothing more than that.

Currently there is also no US Citizenship requirement, only the requirement that a truck driver have a valid work visa or work authorization documentation and lawful presence in the US. This may change, but at the time of this article it has not.

Training and experience are also often ignored. The towing industry does a great job training for recovery and to prevent damage to the towed vehicles but a horrible job training drivers to actually drive the tow truck, which is 80-90% of their daily job duties.

Legal Update: Indiana Trial Court Finds that Towing, Recovery, and Cleanup Expenses are Covered by Motor Carrier's Auto Liability Policy

As many of you know, the ability to collect on your towing and recovery invoices depends heavily on whether insurers pay the bill. One of the most common fights is whether towing and recovery expenses are covered by liability policies. Liability insurers typically argue that (a) such expenses are only covered by physical damage policies and (b) there is no "property damage" associated with accidents on public roads. In Indiana, we do not have any binding precedent on this issue. But that may change soon, as we recently secured a court order that held that a liability insurer must cover towing and cleanup expenses for a semi-truck accident.

The Key Facts

An Indiana-based trucking company was driving eastbound on I-64 in Illinois when it crashed. The walls of the trailer were ripped open, scattering cargo (vegetables) across the roadway and median. The trailer's axle came off, and the trailer was jackknifed across both lanes. Fuel was leaking from both the tractor and the trailer. Two towing companies, Sully's Towing & Recovery and Tri-State Towing and Recovery, responded to the scene. They spent 12 plus hours cleaning up the leaked fuel and cargo, recovering and towing the tractor and trailer, and restoring the roadway and median to pre-loss condition. After the cleanup was completed, two of the trucking company's insurers (physical damage and cargo) paid for portions of the invoices. But the auto liability insurer refused to pay the balance of the invoice, claiming that it was only required to pay \$7,500 because of a sublimit in its policy for "pollution" expenses.

The Lawsuit

Tri-State and Sully's sued in Marion County, Indiana, and secured a default judgment against the trucking company. We then initiated "proceedings supplemental" to pursue the auto liability insurer. We later engaged in summary judgment briefing on the issue of whether a liability policy applies to a towing company's towing, recovery, and cleanup expenses.

The Ruling

On February 27, 2026, the trial court sided with the towing companies. In doing so, the trial court resolved three key issues. First, the court held that the accident caused "property damage" as that term is defined in liability policies. It found that the scattered cargo, leaking fuel, and inoperable tractor and trailer laying across the highway rendered the road "damaged and unusable." Second, the court held that a towing company's "towing and recovery services" qualify as "damages because of...property damage." Third, the court held that the trucking company was "legally obligated" to pay these damages, which is another requirement that must be satisfied. The court found that

Illinois law (like Indiana law) makes vehicle owners and operators liable for damages caused to roadways. As such, the trucking company was “legally” required to pay for the towing companies’ services. Based on these three findings, the court held that the liability insurer was liable for the remaining towing, recovery, and cleanup charges.

However, the fight is not yet over. The liability insurer is appealing the ruling. If we prevail on appeal, towing companies in Indiana will have binding precedent they can show to insurers when those insurers try to deny coverage for these types of claims. Stay tuned.

If you have any questions, please send me an email (rleagre@psrb.com) or give me a call (317-637-0700).

The information contained in this article is provided for information purposes only and should not be construed as legal advice on any subject matter.

Do-It-Yourself Lien Letters

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MARCH TOW OPERATOR SAFETY & OPERATIONS REMINDERS

As we move into March, changing weather and increased roadway activity create new challenges for tow operators across Indiana. Spring is a good time to review safety practices, inspect equipment, and ensure your drivers are properly protected. Below are several reminders for towing companies and operators as we head into a busy season.

Spring Weather Preparedness

March weather in Indiana can change quickly, bringing rain, fog, wind, and occasional late-season snow. These conditions can make roadside operations more dangerous.

Take time to:

- Inspect tire condition on all wreckers and service vehicles
- Check windshield wipers and lighting systems
- Restock absorbent, spill kits, and cleanup materials
- Verify traffic cones, warning triangles, and safety equipment are in good condition

Being prepared helps operators respond safely and efficiently when conditions are less than ideal.

Stay Visible – Protect Yourself on the Roadside

With warmer weather approaching, traffic volume continues to increase. Operators should always prioritize scene safety.

Best practices include:

- Wearing high-visibility safety apparel
- Setting cones and warning devices early when arriving at a scene
- Positioning trucks to create a protective work zone
- Using proper emergency lighting

Remember to remind motorists about the importance of Indiana's Slow Down Move Over Law, which is designed to protect first responders and roadside workers.

Review Billing and Payment Policies

This is a good time for towing companies to review their billing practices and documentation.

Consider reviewing:

- Posted rate sheets and service pricing
- Credit card processing policies and fee compliance
- Authorization forms and paperwork used during private property or police rotations

Ensuring your paperwork and policies are up to date helps protect your business and avoids confusion with customers.

Equipment Inspection

Spring is also an ideal time to perform a quarterly equipment inspection on all recovery vehicles and support equipment.

Items to check include:

- Winch cables and hooks

- Chains, binders, and rigging equipment
- Wheel lift components and safety locks
- Hydraulic systems and potential leaks
- Light bars and warning lighting

Regular inspections reduce downtime and improve operator safety on the job.

Invest in Driver Training

Training remains one of the best investments a towing company can make. Well-trained operators work safer, reduce liability, and provide better service.

Training opportunities help reinforce:

- Traffic incident management procedures
- Safe recovery techniques
- Hazard awareness at roadside scenes
- Proper equipment usage

ITWA will be hosting Light and Medium Duty Driver Training on May 9–10 in Indianapolis, and we encourage companies to take advantage of this opportunity to invest in their operators.

Verify Driver Protection Benefits

Recent incidents in the towing industry remind us how important it is to ensure drivers are properly protected.

ITWA members should verify:

- Employee memberships are current
- Drivers are eligible for the ITWA Survivor Fund
- Enrollment forms are completed for the Accidental Death Insurance Program

Taking a few minutes to confirm these details can make a significant difference for families if tragedy ever occurs.

Mark Your Calendar

Several important industry events are coming up this year:

ITWA Driver Training

May 9–10, 2026 – Indianapolis

Indiana Tow Show

July 31 – August 1, 2026

Fair Oaks Farms Conference Center – Fair Oaks, Indiana

These events provide valuable training, networking opportunities, and industry updates for towing professionals across the state.



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Thank You for Supporting ITWA in 2026

As membership renewals continue, we want to sincerely thank those who have already renewed for 2026.

Your dues directly support:

- Training and education development
- Industry advocacy efforts with full time lobbyist
- Event Planning and execution
- Member communication and outreach
- Growth of the Indiana towing community

If you have not yet renewed, we encourage you to do so and remain part of the statewide network representing Indiana's towing professionals. Together, we elevate the industry!

Indiana Towing and Wrecker Association

Serving Indiana's Towing Professionals with Leadership, Training and Advocacy



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Tow Operator Humor Corner

MARCH EDITION

1. Spring in Indiana

Spring in Indiana means three things:

- Potholes big enough to lose a tire in
- Cars stuck in muddy ditches
- Tow trucks finally getting a break from snow... until the next surprise storm.

2. Tow Operator Weather Forecast

Indiana March Forecast:

Morning – Snow

Afternoon – Sunshine

Evening – Rain

Night – 6 cars in the ditch. Looks like another busy shift.

3. Tow Operator Diet Plan

Tow operators have a very strict diet in March:

- Coffee
- Gas station breakfast sandwich
- Coffee
- Cold french fries from lunch
- More coffee

4. Tow Truck Definition

Tow Truck:

A vehicle that arrives exactly when someone says, “I swear it was running just fine yesterday.”

5. Tow Operator Luck

Tow operators don't believe in luck...but we do believe in:

- Dead batteries in grocery store parking lots
- Keys locked in cars during rainstorms
- And customers who say, "I just need a quick tow."

6. Tow Driver Logic

If the weather is nice...

No calls.

If it's raining, snowing, and 2 AM...

Everyone needs a tow.

7. Tow Operator Fitness Program

Who needs a gym membership when you can:

- Drag chains
- Lift dollies
- Climb under cars
- And push vehicles out of intersections. Tow drivers call it "functional strength training."

8. Tow Operator Truth

The three most common customer phrases:

1. "It just started making that noise."
2. "I only drove it a mile like that."
3. "The other tow company said it would be cheaper."

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Karey Crone | Owner
I-70 Wrecker Service & Garage
Camby, Indiana

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- Hook & Winch (I.T.W.A.)
- Professional Towing & Recovery Operators of Illinois (P.T.R.O.I.)
- Towing & Recovery Association of Kentucky (T.R.A.K.)



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