

# Complaint Box | No Standing

BY RALPH BLUMENTHAL JUNE 12, 2009 10:30 AM

June 12, 2009 10:30 am



Ralph

Blumenthal/The New York Times

The other day on Fifth Avenue in the 50s, I was confronted with one of those ubiquitous red warning signs with a snowflake: “Snow Route / No Standing During Emergency / Vehicles Towed.” Underneath it, another red sign said: “No Standing Anytime.”

## COMPLAINT BOX

### What Gets Your Goat?

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So there was no standing when there was a snow emergency and there was no standing when there was not a snow emergency. Like, no standing ever. But sometimes really no standing.

If there was no standing anytime, why did I need to know there was also no standing during a snow emergency? Did the Ten Commandments say also no adultery on Hamptons weekends?

Luckily, I was on foot. You would not want to be driving and trying to decipher the esoteric code of New York City’s parking signs at the same time.

On East 47th Street near the United Nations, twin signs announce: “No Standing Anytime” and “No Standing / 6 AM-6 PM / Wednesday / Except Farmers Market.” Definitely too much information.

In the West 40s, another pair presented an intriguing puzzle: “No Standing / 3 AM-5 AM / Except Sunday,” and just below, “Other Times/No Standing Anytime/Taxi Stand.”

So you could stand there weekdays and Saturdays before 3 a.m. and after 5 a.m., and all day Sunday. Except when you couldn't. Which was all the time — unless you were a taxi. Did street cleaners come around in those two wee hours? Deliveries? Or was there some other mysterious reason the street had to be free of cars before dawn?

A parking pole in the West 40s posed another riddle. Underneath the standard “No Parking Anytime” was a sign saying “NYC Parking Card Available.”

Huh? A card not to park anytime?

Some signs just took a little time to decipher. Along First Avenue in the 50s, there was “No standing 7-10 AM/4-7 PM/Except Sunday.” Simple enough: Sundays you could stand all you want. Weekdays and Saturdays, only between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. and after 7 p.m.

But oops, not so fast. “Other Times / No Standing / Except Commercial Vehicles / Metered Parking / 3 Hr. Limit / Except Sunday” read another sign below.

Hmmmm. Only commercial vehicles could stand there — for three hours, if they bought a meter ticket. Maybe.

I was contemplating the nuanced difference between standing and parking when I spotted a pair of signs on 40th Street near Avenue of the Americas. One said, “No Standing/7AM-7 PM/Except Sunday.” Fair enough. You could leave your car there any night and all day Sunday. Wrong. Because the other sign said, “No Parking/2 AM-6 AM/Mon Wed Fri.” So, as I figured it, three days a week for four hours in the middle of the night you could sit (uh, stand) there in your car but you could not leave it parked, not without risking a ticket.

In Midtown, a pole — virtually a sign tree — spouted an array of proscriptions requiring consultation of a calendar if not an astrological chart. The first banned standing from 3 p.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Friday. The next said no parking for street cleaning from 8:30 a.m. to 9 a.m. except Sunday. Then came a sign allowing Muni-Metered one-hour parking weekdays from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. And finally another permitting parking from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. Saturdays.

My head was still spinning when I peeked into a garage near Times Square to see how drivers might avoid the confusion of street parking.

For up to half an hour, the rate was \$9.29 (plus, of course, 18 percent parking tax.) For two hours, \$17.74. Twelve hours, \$29.57. Twenty-four hours, \$34.64.

Except if you enter in the 24 hours starting at 4 a.m. Saturdays, when the rate drops to \$11.83 for 12 hours, or the 24 hours starting at 4 a.m. Sundays, when the rate is \$8.45 for up to 12 hours, or if you enter on Mondays through Fridays between 4 a.m. and 10 a.m. and exit by 8 p.m. ...