

SECOND REGULAR SESSION

HOUSE BILL NO. 2247

95TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

INTRODUCED BY REPRESENTATIVE BURLISON.

4570L.03I

D. ADAM CRUMBLISS, Chief Clerk

AN ACT

To repeal section 304.155, RSMo, and to enact in lieu thereof one new section relating to abandoned vehicles.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the state of Missouri, as follows:

Section A. Section 304.155, RSMo, is repealed and one new section enacted in lieu thereof, to be known as section 304.155, to read as follows:

304.155. 1. Any law enforcement officer within the officer's jurisdiction, or an officer of a government agency where that agency's real property is concerned, may authorize a towing company to remove to a place of safety:

(1) Any abandoned property on the right-of-way of:

(a) Any interstate highway or freeway in an urbanized area, left unattended for ten hours, or immediately if a law enforcement officer determines that the abandoned property is a serious hazard to other motorists, provided that commercial motor vehicles not hauling materials designated as hazardous under 49 U.S.C. 5103(a) may only be removed under this subdivision to a place of safety until the owner or owner's representative has had a reasonable opportunity to contact a towing company of choice;

(b) Any interstate highway or freeway outside of an urbanized area, left unattended for twenty-four hours, or after four hours if a law enforcement officer determines that the abandoned property is a serious hazard to other motorists, provided that commercial motor vehicles not hauling materials designated as hazardous under 49 U.S.C. 5103(a) may only be removed under this subdivision to a place of safety until the owner or owner's representative has had a reasonable opportunity to contact a towing company of choice;

EXPLANATION — Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets [thus] in the above bill is not enacted and is intended to be omitted from the law. Matter in **bold-face** type in the above bill is proposed language.

17 (c) Any state highway other than an interstate highway or freeway in an urbanized area,
18 left unattended for more than ten hours; or

19 (d) Any state highway other than an interstate highway or freeway outside of an
20 urbanized area, left unattended for more than twenty-four hours; provided that commercial motor
21 vehicles not hauling waste designated as hazardous under 49 U.S.C. 5103(a) may only be
22 removed under this subdivision to a place of safety until the owner or owner's representative has
23 had a reasonable opportunity to contact a towing company of choice;

24 (2) Any unattended abandoned property illegally left standing upon any highway or
25 bridge if the abandoned property is left in a position or under such circumstances as to obstruct
26 the normal movement of traffic where there is no reasonable indication that the person in control
27 of the property is arranging for its immediate control or removal;

28 (3) Any abandoned property which has been abandoned under section 577.080, RSMo;

29 (4) Any abandoned property which has been reported as stolen or taken without consent
30 of the owner;

31 (5) Any abandoned property for which the person operating such property is arrested for
32 an alleged offense for which the officer takes the person into custody and where such person is
33 unable to arrange for the property's timely removal;

34 (6) Any abandoned property which due to any other state law or local ordinance is
35 subject to towing because of the owner's outstanding traffic or parking violations;

36 (7) Any abandoned property left unattended in violation of a state law or local ordinance
37 where signs have been posted giving notice of the law or where the violation causes a safety
38 hazard;

39 (8) Any abandoned property illegally left standing on the waters of this state as defined
40 in section 306.010, RSMo, where the abandoned property is obstructing the normal movement
41 of traffic, or where the abandoned property has been unattended for more than ten hours or is
42 floating loose on the water; or

43 (9) Any abandoned property for which the person operating such property or vehicle
44 eludes arrest for an alleged offense for which the officer would have taken the offender into
45 custody.

46 2. The department of transportation or any law enforcement officer within the officer's
47 jurisdiction may immediately remove any abandoned, unattended, wrecked, burned or partially
48 dismantled property, spilled cargo or other personal property from the right-of-way of any
49 interstate highway, freeway, or state highway if the abandoned property, cargo or personal
50 property is creating a traffic hazard because of its position in relation to the interstate highway,
51 freeway, or state highway. In the event the property creating a traffic hazard is a commercial
52 motor vehicle, as defined in section 302.700, RSMo, the department's authority under this

53 subsection shall be limited to authorizing a towing company to remove the commercial motor
54 vehicle to a place of safety, except that the owner of the commercial motor vehicle or the owner's
55 designated representative shall have a reasonable opportunity to contact a towing company of
56 choice. The provisions of this subsection shall not apply to vehicles transporting any material
57 which has been designated as hazardous under Section 5103(a) of Title 49, U.S.C.

58 **3. Prior to authorizing a tow under this section, the officer may perform a visual**
59 **inspection of the contents of the vehicle to determine if there is reason for suspicion that**
60 **a crime could have occurred. The law enforcement officer who finds an abandoned vehicle**
61 **shall be required to check the vehicle registration and have his or her law enforcement**
62 **agency attempt to contact the registered owner to determine if the owner knows the vehicle**
63 **has been abandoned and inform such owner that if the vehicle is not retrieved that it will**
64 **be towed or if circumstances require immediate removal that such vehicle will be**
65 **immediately towed. If the vehicle is registered in another jurisdiction, the officer shall**
66 **have his or her law enforcement agency contact the law enforcement agency with**
67 **jurisdiction where the vehicle is registered and that agency shall be responsible for**
68 **attempting to notify the vehicle owner of the vehicle's status and the impending tow.** Any
69 law enforcement agency authorizing a tow pursuant to this section in which the abandoned
70 property is moved from the immediate vicinity shall complete a crime inquiry and inspection
71 report. Any state or federal government agency other than a law enforcement agency authorizing
72 a tow pursuant to this section in which the abandoned property is moved away from the
73 immediate vicinity in which it was abandoned shall report the towing to the state highway patrol
74 or water patrol within two hours of the tow along with a crime inquiry and inspection report as
75 required in this section. Any local government agency, other than a law enforcement agency,
76 authorizing a tow pursuant to this section where property is towed away from the immediate
77 vicinity shall report the tow to the local law enforcement agency within two hours along with a
78 crime inquiry and inspection report.

79 4. Neither the law enforcement officer, government agency official nor anyone having
80 custody of abandoned property under his direction shall be liable for any damage to such
81 abandoned property occasioned by a removal authorized by this section or by ordinance of a
82 county or municipality licensing and regulating the sale of abandoned property by the
83 municipality, other than damages occasioned by negligence or by willful or wanton acts or
84 omissions.

85 5. The owner of abandoned property removed as provided in this section or in section
86 304.157 shall be responsible for payment of all reasonable charges for towing and storage of
87 such abandoned property as provided in section 304.158.

88 6. Upon the towing of any abandoned property pursuant to this section or under authority
89 of a law enforcement officer or local government agency pursuant to section 304.157, the law
90 enforcement agency that authorized such towing or was properly notified by another government
91 agency of such towing shall promptly make an inquiry with the national crime information center
92 and any statewide Missouri law enforcement computer system to determine if the abandoned
93 property has been reported as stolen and shall enter the information pertaining to the towed
94 property into the statewide law enforcement computer system. If the abandoned property is not
95 claimed within ten working days of the towing, the tower who has on-line access to the
96 department of revenue's records shall make an inquiry to determine the abandoned property
97 owner and lienholder, if any, of record. In the event that the records of the department of
98 revenue fail to disclose the name of the owner or any lienholder of record, the tower shall comply
99 with the requirements of subsection 3 of section 304.156. If the tower does not have on-line
100 access, the law enforcement agency shall submit a crime inquiry and inspection report to the
101 director of revenue. A towing company that does not have on-line access to the department's
102 records and that is in possession of abandoned property after ten working days shall report such
103 fact to the law enforcement agency with which the crime inquiry and inspection report was filed.
104 The crime inquiry and inspection report shall be designed by the director of revenue and shall
105 include the following:

- 106 (1) The year, model, make and property identification number of the property and the
107 owner and any lienholders, if known;
- 108 (2) A description of any damage to the property noted by the officer authorizing the tow;
- 109 (3) The license plate or registration number and the state of issuance, if available;
- 110 (4) The storage location of the towed property;
- 111 (5) The name, telephone number and address of the towing company;
- 112 (6) The date, place and reason for the towing of the abandoned property;
- 113 (7) The date of the inquiry of the national crime information center, any statewide
114 Missouri law enforcement computer system and any other similar system which has titling and
115 registration information to determine if the abandoned property had been stolen. This
116 information shall be entered only by the law enforcement agency making the inquiry;
- 117 (8) The signature and printed name of the officer authorizing the tow;
- 118 (9) The name of the towing company, the signature and printed name of the towing
119 operator, and an indicator disclosing whether the tower has on-line access to the department's
120 records; and
- 121 (10) Any additional information the director of revenue deems appropriate.

122 7. One copy of the crime inquiry and inspection report shall remain with the agency
123 which authorized the tow. One copy shall be provided to and retained by the storage facility and

124 one copy shall be retained by the towing facility in an accessible format in the business records
125 for a period of three years from the date of the tow or removal.

126 8. The owner of such abandoned property, or the holder of a valid security interest of
127 record, may reclaim it from the towing company upon proof of ownership or valid security
128 interest of record and payment of all reasonable charges for the towing and storage of the
129 abandoned property.

130 9. Any person who removes abandoned property at the direction of a law enforcement
131 officer or an officer of a government agency where that agency's real property is concerned as
132 provided in this section shall have a lien for all reasonable charges for the towing and storage of
133 the abandoned property until possession of the abandoned property is voluntarily relinquished
134 to the owner of the abandoned property or to the holder of a valid security interest of record.
135 Any personal property within the abandoned property need not be released to the owner thereof
136 until the reasonable or agreed charges for such recovery, transportation or safekeeping have been
137 paid or satisfactory arrangements for payment have been made, except that any medication
138 prescribed by a physician shall be released to the owner thereof upon request. The company
139 holding or storing the abandoned property shall either release the personal property to the owner
140 of the abandoned property or allow the owner to inspect the property and provide an itemized
141 receipt for the contents. The company holding or storing the property shall be strictly liable for
142 the condition and safe return of the personal property. Such lien shall be enforced in the manner
143 provided under section 304.156.

144 10. Towing companies shall keep a record for three years on any abandoned property
145 towed and not reclaimed by the owner of the abandoned property. Such record shall contain
146 information regarding the authorization to tow, copies of all correspondence with the department
147 of revenue concerning the abandoned property, including copies of any online records of the
148 towing company accessed and information concerning the final disposition of the possession of
149 the abandoned property.

150 11. If a lienholder repossesses any motor vehicle, trailer, all-terrain vehicle, outboard
151 motor or vessel without the knowledge or cooperation of the owner, then the reposessor shall
152 notify the local law enforcement agency where the repossession occurred within two hours of
153 the repossession and shall further provide the local law enforcement agency with any additional
154 information the agency deems appropriate. The local law enforcement agency shall make an
155 inquiry with the national crime information center and the Missouri statewide law enforcement
156 computer system and shall enter the repossessed vehicle into the statewide law enforcement
157 computer system.

158 12. Notwithstanding the provisions of section 301.227, RSMo, any towing company who
159 has complied with the notification provisions in section 304.156 including notice that any

160 property remaining unredeemed after thirty days may be sold as scrap property may then dispose
161 of such property as provided in this subsection. Such sale shall only occur if at least thirty days
162 has passed since the date of such notification, the abandoned property remains unredeemed with
163 no satisfactory arrangements made with the towing company for continued storage, and the
164 owner or holder of a security agreement has not requested a hearing as provided in section
165 304.156. The towing company may dispose of such abandoned property by selling the property
166 on a bill of sale as prescribed by the director of revenue to a scrap metal operator or licensed
167 salvage dealer for destruction purposes only. The towing company shall forward a copy of the
168 bill of sale provided by the scrap metal operator or licensed salvage dealer to the director of
169 revenue within two weeks of the date of such sale. The towing company shall keep a record of
170 each such vehicle sold for destruction for three years that shall be available for inspection by law
171 enforcement and authorized department of revenue officials. The record shall contain the year,
172 make, identification number of the property, date of sale, and name of the purchasing scrap metal
173 operator or licensed salvage dealer and copies of all notifications issued by the towing company
174 as required in this chapter. Scrap metal operators or licensed salvage dealers shall keep a record
175 of the purchase of such property as provided in section 301.227, RSMo. Scrap metal operators
176 and licensed salvage dealers may obtain a junk certificate as provided in section 301.227, RSMo,
177 on vehicles purchased on a bill of sale pursuant to this section.

✓