



# East Norriton Township Police Department

## GENERAL ORDER 1.2.7

### INVENTORY SEARCH OF IMPOUNDED VEHICLES

Subject:

**Issued Date:**

March 23, 2011

**Effective Date:**

March 23, 2011

**Revised Date:**

April 27, 2016

PLEAC STANDARD Reference

#### Index Words

#### 1.2.7 Inventory Search of Impounded Vehicles

A. It is the policy of this police department that a warrant-less inventory search be conducted in every case where a motor vehicle is towed or impounded for the purpose of safe guarding the owner/s property. Vehicles towed and impounded for criminal activity will not be searched without a search warrant or consent (**Refer to G.O. 1.2.3**).

B. DEFINITIONS

1. **Motor Vehicle-** A vehicle which is self-propelled, except one which is propelled solely by human power or by electric power obtained from overhead trolley wires, but not operated upon rails.
2. **Impound-** A police officer's taking of a motor vehicle into physical custody for the purpose of storage and safekeeping, until the owner is identified and located or released from custody or until the motor vehicle is otherwise released. Custody of the vehicle must be lawful and necessary.

C. This directive is designed to provide officers with uniform guidelines to follow when conducting a warrant-less inventory search of a motor vehicle that is impounded. These guidelines are directed toward the achievement of the following goals:

1. Protection of police officers and the Department from claims of disputes concerning allegedly lost or stolen property.
2. Protection and preservation of the property for its owner while that property remains in police custody.
3. Assurance that inventory searches are conducted within the limits imposed by the Courts.

D. Prior to conducting an inventory search, there must be a lawful and necessary impoundment of the motor vehicle.

1. Vehicles shall only be removed if the vehicle interferes with normal traffic movement or constitutes a safety hazard.

## E. IMPOUNDMENT

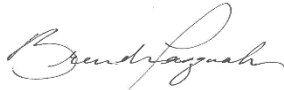
1. Officers are authorized to secure an approved wrecker for the purpose of having a vehicle towed to an impound lot, secure bay in the police garage, or other place of safety under any of the following circumstances:
  - a. Report has been made the vehicle has been stolen or taken without the consent of the owner.
  - b. The person(s) in charge of the vehicle are physically unable to provide for the custody or removal of the vehicle
  - c. The person driving or in control of the vehicle is arrested for an alleged offense and the officer is required by law to take the arrestee before an issuing authority without unnecessary delay
  - d. The vehicle is in violation of section 3353 (relating to prohibitions in specified places) except for overtime parking
  - e. The vehicle has been abandoned as defined in Title 75 and officers shall comply with the provisions of Chapter 73 (relating to abandoned vehicles/cargos)
2. When an officer determines there is a need to impound a motor vehicle, the officer shall notify the Communications Center and the Duty Sergeant/OIC, complete a vehicle towing/release form, and an incident report concerning the impoundment. (Incident Report is not necessary if impounding a motor vehicle as a result of a motor vehicle accident).
3. All vehicles impounded for reasons of criminal activity shall be placed in the secured East Norriton garage bay and a search warrant obtained prior to inventory.  
  
(Refer to Title 75 Section 3352)

## F. INVENTORY

1. An inventory of the contents of an impounded motor vehicle shall be conducted in every case. The inventory shall consist of a list of all property contained in those portions of the vehicle that are open, unlocked or easily accessible to the officer.
2. All property must be listed on the Auto Inventory and Towing Log form.
3. Items of personal property greater than ordinary value shall be removed from the vehicle and secured in the Temporary Evidence Room. A completed Property Form shall be completed for all property before being secured in Temporary Evidence.
4. It shall be noted on the Auto Inventory and Towing Log form property has been removed from the vehicle. Attach a copy of the Property Form to the Towing form.
5. A locked vehicle may be opened with the use of a door opening device, provided there is no apparent danger of damaging the lock or the vehicle in attempting to open the doors.
6. Locked trunks of vehicles shall not be forced open, but may be inventory searched if a key is available.

7. Containers not sealed or articles of personal luggage which are closed and unlocked shall be inventory searched for valuables. All items shall be properly documented and placed into Temporary Evidence.
8. EXCEPTIONS:
  - a. A vehicle door or trunk may be physically forced open when it is known, or there are reasonable grounds to believe valuables are being stored in these areas.
  - b. Sealed containers or articles of personal luggage which are locked where no key is available, shall not be forced open for the purpose of inventorying their contents unless it is known or there are reasonable grounds to believe contain valuables. Such containers or luggage shall be removed from the vehicle and placed in the Temporary Evidence Room, accompanied by a Property Receipt form.
  - c. The officer conducting the inventory should notify their supervisor of any exceptional circumstances, in order to determine the proper procedure to follow.

By order of:



Brandon Pasquale  
Chief of Police