

321J.4B Motor vehicle impoundment or immobilization — penalty — liability of vehicle owner.

1. For purposes of this section:

a. “*Immobilized*” means the installation of a device in a motor vehicle that completely prevents a motor vehicle from being operated, or the installation of an ignition interlock device of a type approved by the commissioner of public safety.

b. “*Impoundment*” means the process of seizure and confinement within an enclosed area of a motor vehicle, for the purpose of restricting access to the vehicle.

c. “*Owner*” means the registered titleholder of a motor vehicle; except in the case where a rental or leasing agency is the registered titleholder, in which case the lessee of the vehicle shall be treated as the owner of the vehicle for purposes of this section.

2. a. A motor vehicle is subject to impoundment in the following circumstances:

(1) If a person operates a vehicle in violation of section 321J.2, and if convicted for that conduct, the conviction would be a second or subsequent offense under section 321J.2.

(2) If a person operates a vehicle while that person’s driver’s license or operating privilege has been suspended, denied, revoked, or barred due to a violation of section 321J.2.

b. The clerk of court shall send notice of a conviction of an offense for which the vehicle was impounded to the impounding authority upon conviction of the defendant for such offense.

c. Impoundment of the vehicle under this section may occur in addition to any criminal penalty imposed under chapter 321 or this chapter for the underlying criminal offense.

3. The motor vehicle operated by the person in the commission of any offense included in subsection 2 may be immediately impounded or immobilized in accordance with this section.

a. A person or agency taking possession of an impounded or immobilized motor vehicle shall do the following:

(1) Make an inventory of any property contained in the vehicle, according to the agency’s inventory procedure. The agency responsible for the motor vehicle shall also deliver a copy of the inventory to the county attorney.

(2) Contact all rental or leasing agencies registered as owners of the vehicle, as well as any parties registered as holders of a secured interest in the vehicle, in accordance with subsection 12.

b. The county attorney shall file a copy of the inventory with the district court as part of each file related to criminal charges filed under this section.

4. An owner of a motor vehicle impounded or immobilized under this section, who knows of, should have known of, or gives consent to the operation of, the motor vehicle in violation of subsection 2, paragraph “a”, subparagraph (2), shall be:

a. Guilty of a simple misdemeanor, and

b. Jointly and severally liable for any damages caused by the person who operated the motor vehicle, subject to the provisions of chapter 668.

5. a. The following persons shall be entitled to immediate return of the motor vehicle without payment of costs associated with the impoundment or immobilization of the vehicle:

(1) The owner of the motor vehicle, if the person who operated the motor vehicle is not a co-owner of the motor vehicle.

(2) A motor vehicle rental or leasing agency that owns the vehicle.

(3) A person who owns the motor vehicle and who is charged but is not convicted of the violation of section 321.218, 321.561, 321A.32, 321J.2, or 321J.21, which resulted in the impoundment or immobilization of the motor vehicle under this section.

b. Upon conviction of the defendant for a violation of subsection 2, paragraph “a”, subparagraph (1), the court may order continued impoundment, or the immobilization, of the motor vehicle used in the commission of the offense, if the convicted person is the owner of the motor vehicle, and shall specify all of the following in the order:

(1) The motor vehicle that is subject to the order.

(2) The period of impoundment or immobilization.

(3) The person or agency responsible for carrying out the order requiring continued impoundment, or the immobilization, of the motor vehicle.

c. If the vehicle subject to the order is in the custody of a law enforcement agency, the court

shall designate that agency as the responsible agency. If the vehicle is not in the custody of a law enforcement agency, the person or agency responsible for carrying out the order shall be any person deemed appropriate by the court, including but not limited to a law enforcement agency with jurisdiction over the area in which the residence of the vehicle owner is located. The person or agency responsible for carrying out the order shall determine whether the motor vehicle shall be impounded or immobilized.

d. The period of impoundment or immobilization of a motor vehicle under this section shall be the period of license revocation imposed upon the person convicted of the offense or one hundred eighty days, whichever period is longer. The impoundment or immobilization period shall commence on the day that the vehicle is first impounded or immobilized.

e. The clerk of the district court shall send a copy of the order to the department, the person convicted of the offense, the person or agency responsible for executing the order for impoundment or immobilization, and any holders of any security interests in the vehicle.

f. (1) If the vehicle subject to the court order is not in the custody of a law enforcement agency, the person or agency designated in the order as the person or agency responsible for executing the order shall, upon receipt of the order, promptly locate the vehicle specified in the order, seize the motor vehicle and the license plates, and send or deliver the vehicle's license plates to the department.

(2) If the vehicle is located at a place other than the place at which the court order is to be carried out, the person or agency responsible for executing the order shall arrange for the vehicle to be moved to the place of impoundment or immobilization. When the vehicle is found, is impounded or immobilized, and is at the place of impoundment or immobilization, the person or agency responsible for executing the order shall notify the clerk of the date on which the order was executed. The clerk shall notify the department of the date on which the order was executed.

g. Upon receipt of a court order for continued impoundment or immobilization of the motor vehicle, the agency shall review the value of the vehicle in relation to the costs associated with the period of impoundment of the motor vehicle specified in the order. If the agency determines that the costs of impoundment of the motor vehicle exceed the actual wholesale value of the motor vehicle, the agency may treat the vehicle as an abandoned vehicle pursuant to section 321.89. If the agency elects to treat the motor vehicle as abandoned, the agency shall notify the registered owner of the motor vehicle that the vehicle shall be deemed abandoned and shall be sold in the manner provided in section 321.89 if payment of the total cost of impoundment is not received within twenty-one days of the mailing of the notice. The agency shall provide documentation regarding the valuation of the vehicle and the costs of impoundment. This paragraph shall not apply to vehicles that are immobilized pursuant to this section or if subsection 12, paragraph "a", subparagraph (1) or (2), applies.

6. Upon conviction of the defendant for a second or subsequent violation of subsection 2, paragraph "a", subparagraph (2), the court shall order, if the convicted person is the owner of the motor vehicle used in the commission of the offense, that that motor vehicle be seized and forfeited to the state pursuant to chapters 809 and 809A.

7. a. Upon receipt of a notice of conviction of the defendant for a violation of subsection 2, the impounding authority shall seize the motor vehicle's license plates and registration, and shall send or deliver them to the department.

b. The department shall destroy license plates received under this section and shall not authorize the release of the vehicle or the issuance of new license plates for the vehicle until the period of impoundment or immobilization has expired, and the fee and costs assessed under subsection 10 have been paid. The fee for issuance of new license plates and certificates of registration shall be the same as for the replacement of lost, mutilated, or destroyed license plates and certificates of registration.

8. a. Upon conviction for a violation of subsection 2, the court shall assess the defendant, in addition to any other penalty, a fee of one hundred dollars plus the cost of any expenses for towing, storage, and any other costs of impounding or immobilizing the motor vehicle, to be paid to the clerk of the district court.

b. The person or agency responsible for impoundment or immobilization under this

section shall inform the court of the costs of towing, storage, and any other costs of impounding or immobilizing the motor vehicle. Upon payment of the fee and costs, the clerk shall forward a copy of the receipt to the department.

c. If a law enforcement agency impounds or immobilizes a motor vehicle, the amount of the fee and expenses deposited with the clerk shall be paid by the clerk to the law enforcement agency responsible for executing the order to reimburse the agency for costs incurred for impoundment or immobilization equipment and, if required, in sending officers to search for and locate the vehicle specified in the impoundment or immobilization order.

9. Operating a motor vehicle on a street or highway in this state in violation of an order of impoundment or immobilization is a serious misdemeanor. A motor vehicle which is subject to an order of impoundment or immobilization that is operated on a street or highway in this state in violation of the order shall be seized and forfeited to the state under chapters 809 and 809A.

10. Once the period of impoundment or immobilization has expired, the owner of the motor vehicle shall have thirty days to claim the motor vehicle and pay all fees and charges imposed under this section. If the owner or the owner's designee has not claimed the vehicle and paid all fees and charges imposed under this section within seven days from the date of expiration of the period, the clerk shall send written notification to the motor vehicle owner, at the owner's last known address, notifying the owner of the date of expiration of the period of impoundment or immobilization and of the period in which the motor vehicle must be claimed. If the motor vehicle owner fails to claim the motor vehicle and pay all fees and charges imposed within the thirty-day period, the motor vehicle shall be forfeited to the state under chapters 809 and 809A.

11. a. (1) During the period of impoundment or immobilization the owner of an impounded or immobilized vehicle shall not sell or transfer the title of the motor vehicle which is subject to the order of impoundment or immobilization.

(2) A person convicted of an offense under subsection 2 shall not purchase or register any motor vehicle during the period of impoundment, immobilization, or license revocation.

b. If, during the period of impoundment or immobilization, the title to the motor vehicle which is the subject of the order is transferred by the foreclosure of a chattel mortgage, a sale upon execution, the cancellation of a conditional sales contract, or an order of a court, the court which enters the order that permits transfer of the title shall notify the department of the transfer of the title. The department shall enter notice of the transfer of the title to the motor vehicle in the previous owner's vehicle registration record.

c. Violation of paragraph "a" is a serious misdemeanor.

12. a. Notwithstanding other requirements of this section:

(1) Upon learning the address or phone number of a rental or leasing company which owns a motor vehicle impounded or immobilized under this section, the peace officer, county attorney, or attorney general shall immediately contact the company to inform the company that the vehicle is available for return to the company.

(2) The holder of a security interest in a vehicle which is impounded or immobilized pursuant to this section or forfeited in the manner provided in chapters 809 and 809A shall be notified of the impoundment, immobilization, or forfeiture within seventy-two hours of the seizure of the vehicle and shall have the right to claim the motor vehicle without payment of any fees or surcharges unless the value of the vehicle exceeds the value of the security interest held by the creditor.

(3) Any of the following persons may make application to the court for permission to operate a motor vehicle, which is impounded or immobilized pursuant to this section, during the period of impoundment or immobilization, if the applicant's driver's license or operating privilege has not been suspended, denied, revoked, or barred, and an ignition interlock device of a type approved by the commissioner of public safety is installed in the motor vehicle prior to operation:

(a) A person, other than the person who committed the offense which resulted in the impoundment or immobilization, who is not a member of the immediate family of the person who committed the offense but is a joint owner of the motor vehicle.

(b) A member of the immediate family of the person who committed the offense which

resulted in the impoundment or immobilization, if the member demonstrates that the motor vehicle that is subject to the order for impoundment or immobilization is the only motor vehicle possessed by the family.

b. For purposes of this section, “*a member of the immediate family*” means a spouse, child, or parent of the person who committed the offense.

13. The impoundment, immobilization, or forfeiture of a motor vehicle under this chapter does not constitute loss of use of a motor vehicle for purposes of any contract of insurance.

95 Acts, ch 48, §11; 95 Acts, ch 143, §5; 96 Acts, ch 1133, §42, 43; 97 Acts, ch 177, §12; 98 Acts, ch 1073, §9; 2010 Acts, ch 1061, §180; 2010 Acts, ch 1069, §103 – 106

Referred to in §321.89, 809A.3