

CHAPTER 556F

LOST PROPERTY

Referred to in [§331.508](#), [331.653](#), [602.8102\(110\)](#)

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556F.1 Definitions.

As used in [this chapter](#), unless the context otherwise requires, “*book*”, “*list*”, “*record*”, or “*schedule*” kept by a county auditor, assessor, treasurer, recorder, sheriff, or other county officer means the county system as defined in [section 445.1](#).

[2000 Acts, ch 1148, § 1](#)

556F.1A Taking up vessels, rafts, logs and lumber.

If any person shall stop or take up any vessel or watercraft, or any raft of logs, or part thereof, or any logs suitable for making lumber or hewn timber, or sawed lumber, found adrift within the limits or upon the boundaries of this state, of the value of five dollars or upwards, including the cargo, tackle, rigging, and other appendages of such vessel or watercraft, such person, within five days thereafter, provided the same shall not have been previously proved and restored to the owner, shall go before some district judge, district associate judge, judicial magistrate or district court clerk where such property is found, and make affidavit setting forth the exact description of such property; where and when the same was found; whether any, and if so what cargo, tackle, rigging, or other appendages were found on board or attached thereto; and that the same has not been altered or defaced, either in whole or in part, since the taking up, either by the person or by any other person to the person’s knowledge.

[C51, §876 – 878; R60, §1506; C73, §1509, 1512; C97, §2371; C24, 27, 31, 35, 39, §12199; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §644.1]

[94 Acts, ch 1188, §27](#)

C95, §556F.1

C2001, §556F.1A

556F.2 Warrant — appraisal — return — record.

The district judge, district associate judge, judicial magistrate, or district court clerk shall thereupon issue a warrant, directed to some peace officer, commanding the peace officer to summon three respectable householders of the neighborhood, who shall proceed without delay to examine and appraise the property, including cargo, tackle, rigging, and other appendages if applicable, and to submit a report regarding the examination and appraisal to the magistrate, judge, or clerk issuing the warrant, who shall transmit a certified copy to the county auditor to be recorded in a lost property book in the auditor’s office.

[C51, §878 – 880; R60, §1506; C73, §1509, 1512; C97, §2371; C24, 27, 31, 35, 39, §12200; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §644.2]

[94 Acts, ch 1188, §27](#)

C95, §556F.2

[95 Acts, ch 49, §18](#)

Referred to in [§331.502](#), [602.6405](#)

556F.3 Value under twenty dollars.

In all cases where the appraisal of any such property shall not exceed the sum of twenty dollars, the finder shall advertise the same on the door of the courthouse, and in three other of the most public places in the county, within five days after the appraisal, and if no person shall appear to claim and prove such property within six months of the time of taking up, it shall vest in the finder.

[C51, §879, 880; R60, §1507; C73, §1513; C97, §2372; S13, §2372; C24, 27, 31, 35, 39, §12201; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §644.3]

[94 Acts, ch 1188, §27](#)

C95, §556F.3

556F.4 Value exceeding twenty dollars.

If the value thereof shall exceed the sum of twenty dollars, the county auditor, within five days from the time of the reception of the magistrate, judge or clerk's certificate at the auditor's office, shall cause an advertisement to be posted on the door of the courthouse, and at three other of the most public places in the county, and also a notice to be published once each week for three weeks successively, in some newspaper printed in this state; and if such property be not claimed or proved within ninety days after the advertisement of the same, as aforesaid, the finder shall deliver the same to the sheriff of the county wherein it was taken up, who shall thereupon proceed to sell it at public auction to the highest bidder for cash, having first given ten days' notice of the time and place of sale, and the proceeds of all such sales, after deducting the costs and other necessary expenses, shall be paid into the county treasury.

[C51, §881; R60, §1507; C73, §1513; C97, §2372; S13, §2372; C24, 27, 31, 35, 39, §12202; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §644.4]

[94 Acts, ch 1188, §27](#)

C95, §556F.4

Referred to in [§331.502](#)

556F.5 Advertisement — when title vests.

In all cases where any vessel, watercraft, logs, or lumber shall be taken up as aforesaid, which shall be of a value less than five dollars, the finder shall advertise the same by posting a notice of such finding in three of the most public places in the neighborhood; but in such cases the finder shall keep and preserve the same in the finder's possession, and shall make restitution thereof to the owner, without fee or reward, except the same be given voluntarily when the owner claims the same, provided it shall be done in three months from such taking up or finding; but, if no owner shall claim such property within the time aforesaid, the exclusive right to it shall be vested in the finder.

[C51, §876, 877; R60, §1510; C73, §1516; C97, §2375; C24, 27, 31, 35, 39, §12203; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §644.5]

[94 Acts, ch 1188, §27](#)

C95, §556F.5

556F.6 Lost goods or money.

If any person shall find any lost goods, money, bank notes, or other things of any description whatever, of the value of five dollars and over, such person shall inform the owner thereof, if known, and make restitution thereof.

[C51, §876 – 879; R60, §1508; C73, §1514; C97, §2373; C24, 27, 31, 35, 39, §12204; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §644.6]

[94 Acts, ch 1188, §27](#)

C95, §556F.6

556F.7 When owner unknown.

If the owner is unknown, the finder shall, within five days after finding the property, take the money, bank notes, and a description of any other property to the county sheriff of the county or the chief of police of the city in which the property was found, and provide an

affidavit describing the property, the time when and place where the property was found, and attesting that no alteration has been made in the appearance of the property since the finding. The sheriff or chief of police shall send a copy of the affidavit to the county auditor who shall enter a description of the property and the value of the property, as nearly as the auditor can determine it, in the auditor's lost property book, together with the copy of the affidavit of the finder.

[R60, §1508; C73, §1514; C97, §2373; C24, 27, 31, 35, 39, §12205; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §644.7]

[94 Acts, ch 1188, §27](#)

C95, §556F.7

[95 Acts, ch 49, §19; 2000 Acts, ch 1043, §2](#)

Referred to in [§331.502](#)

556F.8 Advertisement.

The finder of the lost goods, money, bank notes, or other things shall give written notice of the finding of the property. The notice shall contain an accurate description of the property and a statement as to the time when and place where the same was found, and the post office address of the finder. The notice shall:

1. Be posted at the door of the courthouse in the county in which the property was found or at the city hall or police station if found within a city and in one other of the most public places in the county; and

2. If the property found exceeds forty dollars in value, the notice shall be published once each week for three consecutive weeks in some newspaper published in and having general circulation in the county.

[C51, §877, 878, 880; R60, §1509, 1510; C73, §1510, 1514 – 1516; C97, §2372, 2374; S13, §2372, 2374; C24, 27, 31, 35, 39, §12206; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §644.8]

[94 Acts, ch 1188, §27](#)

C95, §556F.8

[2000 Acts, ch 1043, §3](#)

556F.9 Record of publication.

Proof of publication of said notice and of the posting thereof shall be made by affidavits of the publisher and the person posting said notices, and said affidavits shall be filed in the office of the county auditor of said county.

[C51, §886; C24, 27, 31, 35, 39, §12207; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §644.9]

[94 Acts, ch 1188, §27](#)

C95, §556F.9

Referred to in [§556F.10](#)

556F.10 Additional publication.

The affidavits provided for in [section 556F.9](#) shall be entered by the auditor in the proceedings of the board of supervisors and the same shall be published with the proceedings of said board.

[C24, 27, 31, 35, 39, §12208; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §644.10]

[94 Acts, ch 1188, §27](#)

C95, §556F.10

Referred to in [§331.502](#)

556F.11 Vesting of title.

If no person appears to claim and prove ownership to said goods, money, bank notes, or other things within twelve months of the date when proof of said publication and posting is

filed in the office of the county auditor, the right to such property shall irrevocably vest in said finder.

[C51, §879, 881; R60, §1509, 1510; C73, §1510, 1513, 1515, 1516; C97, §2372, 2374, 2375; S13, §2372, 2374; C24, 27, 31, 35, 39, §12209; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §644.11]

[94 Acts, ch 1188, §27](#)

C95, §556F.11

556F.12 Ownership settled.

In any case where a claim is made to property found or taken up, and the ownership of the property cannot be agreed upon by the finder and claimant, they may make a case before any district judge, associate district judge, or judicial magistrate in the county, who may hear and adjudicate it, and if either of them refuses to make such case the other may make an affidavit of the facts which have previously occurred, and the claimant shall also verify the claim by the claimant's affidavit, and the district judge, associate district judge, or judicial magistrate may take cognizance of and try the matter on the other party having one day's notice, but there shall be no appeal from the decision. [This section](#) does not bar any other remedy given by law.

[C51, §890; R60, §1504; C73, §1517; C97, §2376; C24, 27, 31, 35, 39, §12210; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §644.12]

[94 Acts, ch 1188, §27](#)

C95, §556F.12

Referred to in [§602.6405](#)

556F.13 Compensation.

As a reward for the taking up of boats and other vessels, and for finding lost goods, money, bank notes, and other things, before restitution of the property or proceeds thereof shall be made, the finder shall be entitled to ten percent upon the value thereof, and for taking up any logs or lumber, as hereinbefore described, twenty-five cents for each log not exceeding ten, twenty cents for each exceeding ten and not exceeding fifty, fifteen cents for each exceeding fifty, and fifty cents per thousand feet for sawed lumber.

[C51, §892; R60, §1514; C73, §1511, 1518; C97, §2377; C24, 27, 31, 35, 39, §12211; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §644.13]

[94 Acts, ch 1188, §27](#)

C95, §556F.13

556F.14 Costs, charges and care — assessment.

The owner shall also be required to pay the finder all such costs and charges as may have been paid by the finder for services rendered as aforesaid, including the cost of publication, together with reasonable charges for keeping and taking care of such property, which last mentioned charge, in case the finder and the owner cannot agree, shall be assessed by two disinterested householders of the neighborhood, to be appointed by some magistrate judge of the proper county, whose decision, when made, shall be binding and conclusive on all parties.

[C51, §893; R60, §1514; C73, §1518; C97, §2377; C24, 27, 31, 35, 39, §12212; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §644.14]

[94 Acts, ch 1188, §27](#)

C95, §556F.14

556F.15 Proceeds — forfeiture.

The net proceeds of sales made by the sheriff, and money or bank notes paid over to the county treasurer, as directed in [this chapter](#), shall remain in the hands of the county treasurer in trust for the owner, if the owner applies within one year from the time the proceeds, moneys, or bank notes would have been paid over. However, if no owner appears within that time, the proceeds, moneys, or bank notes shall be forfeited, and the claim of the

owner is forever barred, in which event the money shall be paid to the treasurer of state for deposit in the general fund of the state.

[C51, §885; R60, §1516; C73, §1519; C97, §2378; C24, 27, 31, 35, 39, §12213; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §644.15]

[83 Acts, ch 185, §57, 62](#); [83 Acts, ch 186, §10125, 10201, 10204](#); [94 Acts, ch 1188, §27](#)
C95, §556F.15

556F.16 Responsibility of taker-up.

If the taker-up of any watercraft, logs, or lumber, or finder of lost goods, bank notes, or other things, takes reasonable care of the property, and any unavoidable accident happens to the property without the fault or neglect of the finder or taker-up before the owner has an opportunity of reclaiming the property, the taker-up or finder shall not be accountable for the unavoidable accident, if within ten days of the accident, the finder or taker-up certifies the accident to the county auditor, who shall make an entry of the accident in the auditor's lost property book.

[R60, §1517; C73, §1520; C97, §2379; C24, 27, 31, 35, 39, §12214; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §644.16]

[94 Acts, ch 1188, §27](#)

C95, §556F.16

[95 Acts, ch 49, §20](#)

Referred to in [§331.502](#)

556F.17 Penalty for selling.

If any person shall trade, sell, loan, or take out of the limits of this state any such property taken up or found as provided in [this chapter](#), before the person shall be vested with the right to the property, the person shall forfeit and pay double the value thereof, to be recovered by any person in an action, one half of which shall go to the plaintiff and the other half to the county.

[R60, §1518; C73, §1521; C97, §2380; C24, 27, 31, 35, 39, §12215; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §644.17]

[94 Acts, ch 1188, §27](#)

C95, §556F.17

[2009 Acts, ch 133, §172](#)

556F.18 Failure to comply.

If any person shall take up any boat or vessel, or any logs or lumber, or shall find any goods, money, bank notes, or other things, and shall fail to comply with the requirements of [this chapter](#), the person shall forfeit and pay the sum of twenty dollars, to be recovered in an action by any person who will sue for the same, one half for the use of the person suing and the other half to be deposited in the county treasury for the use of the school districts; but nothing herein contained shall prevent the owner from having and maintaining an action for the recovery of any damage the owner may sustain.

[R60, §1519; C73, §1522; C97, §2381; C24, 27, 31, 35, 39, §12216; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §644.18]

[94 Acts, ch 1188, §27](#)

C95, §556F.18

[2018 Acts, ch 1026, §163](#)