

Sixty-sixth  
Legislative Assembly  
of North Dakota

**HOUSE BILL NO. 1263**

Introduced by

Representatives Dockter, Grueneich, D. Ruby

Senator Rust

A BILL for an Act to create and enact a new subsection to section 39-26-07 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to right of an owner to reclaim an abandoned vehicle; to amend and reenact sections 23.1-15-01, 23.1-15-03, 23.1-15-05, 23.1-15-06, ~~and 23.1-15-07, 39-26-02, and 39-26-06~~ of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to custody and disposition of abandoned motor vehicles; to provide a penalty; and to declare an emergency.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF NORTH DAKOTA:**

**SECTION 1. AMENDMENT.** Section 23.1-15-01 of the North Dakota Century Code is amended and reenacted as follows:

**23.1-15-01. Definitions. (Contingent effective date - [See note](#))**

For purposes of this chapter, unless the context otherwise requires:

1. "Abandoned motor vehicle" means a motor vehicle, as defined in section 39-01-01, that has remained for a period of more than forty-eight hours on public property illegally or lacking vital component parts, or ~~has remained for a period of more than forty-eight hours~~ is located on private property without consent of the person in control of the property or in an inoperable condition such that it has no substantial potential further use consistent with its usual functions, unless it is kept in an enclosed garage or storage building. It also means a motor vehicle voluntarily surrendered by its owner to a person duly licensed under section 23.1-15-09. An antique automobile, as defined in section 39-04-10.4, and other motor vehicles to include parts car and special interest vehicles, may not be considered an abandoned motor vehicle within the meaning of this chapter.
2. "Collector" means the owner of one or more special interest vehicles that collects, purchases, acquires, trades, or disposes of special interest vehicles or parts of special

1 interest vehicles for the person's own use in order to restore, preserve, and maintain a  
2 special interest vehicle or antique vehicle.

3 3. "Commercial towing service" means a registered business in North Dakota that tows  
4 motor vehicles.

5 4. "Department" means the department of environmental quality.

6 4.5. "Emergency towing" means the towing of a vehicle due to a motor vehicle accident,  
7 mechanical breakdown on public roadway, or other emergency-related incident  
8 necessitating vehicle removal for public safety with or without the owner's consent.

9 6. "Parts car" means a motor vehicle generally in nonoperable condition which is owned  
10 by the collector to furnish parts to restore, preserve, and maintain a special interest  
11 vehicle or antique vehicle.

12 ~~5.6.7.~~ "Special interest vehicle" means a motor vehicle that is at least twenty years old and  
13 has not been altered or modified from original manufacturer's specifications and,  
14 because of its historic interest, is being preserved by hobbyists.

15 ~~6.7.8.~~ "Unit of government" includes a state department or agency, a county, city, township,  
16 or other political subdivision.

17 ~~7.8.9.~~ "Vital component parts" means those parts of a motor vehicle that are essential to the  
18 mechanical functioning of the vehicle, including, but not limited to, the motor, drive  
19 train, and wheels.

20 **SECTION 2. AMENDMENT.** Section 23.1-15-03 of the North Dakota Century Code is  
21 amended and reenacted as follows:

22 **23.1-15-03. Custody of abandoned vehicle. (Contingent effective date - [See note](#))**

23 Units of government may take into custody and impound an abandoned motor vehicle. If  
24 requested by an owner, lessee, tenant, or occupant of private property, a commercial towing  
25 service may remove and take into custody an abandoned motor vehicle located on the private  
26 property.

27 **SECTION 3. AMENDMENT.** Section 23.1-15-05 of the North Dakota Century Code is  
28 amended and reenacted as follows:

**23.1-15-05. Notice to owner and law enforcement of abandoned vehicle. (Contingent effective date - [See note](#))**

1. When an abandoned motor vehicle does not fall within the provisions of section 23.1-15-04, the unit of government or commercial towing service taking it into custody shall give notice of the taking within ten days. The notice must set forth the date and place of the taking, the year, make, model, and serial number of the abandoned motor vehicle, and the place where the vehicle is being held, must inform the owner and any lienholders or secured parties of their right to reclaim the vehicle under section 23.1-15-06, and must state that failure of the owner or lienholders or secured parties to exercise their right to reclaim the vehicle is deemed a waiver by them of all right, title, and interest in the vehicle and a consent to the sale~~disposal~~ of the vehicle ~~at a public auction~~ pursuant to section 23.1-15-07.
2. The notice must be sent by certified mail, return receipt requested, to the registered owner, if any, of the abandoned motor vehicle and to all readily identifiable lienholders or secured parties of record. If it is impossible to determine with reasonable certainty the identity and address of the registered owner and all lienholders, the notice must be published once in a newspaper of general circulation in the area where the motor vehicle was abandoned. Published notices may be grouped together for convenience and economy.
3. Subject to section 23.1-15-04, a commercial towing service that takes an abandoned motor vehicle into custody shall provide notice to the law enforcement agency having jurisdiction in the location from which the motor vehicle was towed within twelve hours after completing the tow.

~~a. The notice must include:~~

~~(1) The license plate number and state of registration;~~

~~(2) The location from which the motor vehicle was towed;~~

~~(3) The location to which the motor vehicle was towed;~~

~~(4) The name, address, and telephone number of the commercial towing service that towed and is storing the motor vehicle; and~~

~~(5) A description of the motor vehicle, including make, model, year, and color.~~

~~b.~~

1     4. Notice under subsection 3 must include:

2     a. The license plate number and state of registration;

3     b. The location from which the motor vehicle was towed;

4     c. The location to which the motor vehicle was towed;

5     d. The name, address, and telephone number of the commercial towing service that  
6     towed and is storing the motor vehicle; and

7     e. A description of the motor vehicle, including make, model, year, and color.

8     5. A commercial towing service that violates ~~this subsection must be assessed a fee of~~  
9     ~~five hundred dollars~~ subsection 3 may not collect a storage fee under section  
10    23.1-15-06 and shall return the motor vehicle to the registered owner at no cost to the  
11    owner.

12    **SECTION 4. AMENDMENT.** Section 23.1-15-06 of the North Dakota Century Code is  
13    amended and reenacted as follows:

14    **23.1-15-06. Right of owner to reclaim abandoned vehicle. (Contingent effective date -**  
15    **See note)**

16    1. The owner, secured parties, or ~~any~~a lienholder of an abandoned motor vehicle has a  
17    right to reclaim such vehicle from the unit of government taking ~~it~~the motor vehicle into  
18    custody upon payment of all towing and storage charges resulting from taking the  
19    vehicle into custody within ~~fifteen~~thirty days after the date of the notice required by  
20    section 23.1-15-05.

21    2. The owner, secured parties, or a lienholder of an abandoned motor vehicle, within  
22    thirty days after receipt of the notice required by section 23.1-15-05, has a right to  
23    reclaim the vehicle from a commercial towing service taking the motor vehicle into  
24    custody upon payment of all towing and storage charges resulting from taking the  
25    vehicle into custody.

26    3. Storage charges under subsection 2 may not exceed fifty dollars per day for an  
27    abandoned passenger vehicle, pickup, van, or truck that does not exceed twenty  
28    thousand registered gross weight pounds [9071.85 kilograms].

29    4. Nothing in this chapter may be construed to impair any lien of a garagekeeper under  
30    the laws of this state or the right of a lienholder or secured parties to foreclose. For the  
31    purposes of this section, "garagekeeper" is an operator of a parking place or

establishment, an operator of a motor vehicle storage facility, or an operator of an establishment for the servicing, repair, or maintenance of motor vehicles.

5. This section also applies to emergency towing.

**SECTION 5. AMENDMENT.** Section 23.1-15-07 of the North Dakota Century Code is amended and reenacted as follows:

**23.1-15-07. ~~Public sale~~Disposal of vehicle - Disposition of proceeds. (Contingent effective date - [See note](#))**

1. An abandoned motor vehicle not more than seven model years of age taken into custody by a unit of government and not reclaimed under section 23.1-15-06 must be sold to the highest bidder at public auction or sale, following reasonable published notice. The purchaser must be given a receipt in a form prescribed by the department which is sufficient title to dispose of the vehicle. The receipt also entitles the purchaser to register the vehicle and receive a certificate of title, free and clear of all liens and claims of ownership. The license plates displayed on an abandoned vehicle must be removed and destroyed prior to the purchaser taking possession of the vehicle.
2. ~~From the proceeds of the sale of an abandoned motor vehicle, the unit of government shall reimburse itself for the cost of towing, preserving, and storing the vehicle, and all notice and publication costs incurred pursuant to this chapter. Any remainder from the proceeds of a sale must be held for the owner of the vehicle or entitled lienholder or secured parties for ninety days and then must be deposited in the state treasury as provided in section 1 of article IX of the Constitution of North Dakota and credited to the permanent school fund.~~ If a commercial towing service takes custody of an abandoned motor vehicle and the vehicle is not reclaimed under section 23.1-15-06, the commercial towing service may obtain a release from the department of transportation which is sufficient title to dispose of the vehicle. The release entitles the commercial towing service to register the vehicle and receive a certificate of title, free and clear of all liens and claims of ownership. The license plates displayed on the abandoned vehicle must be removed and destroyed upon receipt of the new title.
3. From the proceeds of the sale of an abandoned motor vehicle, the unit of government or the commercial towing service may reimburse itself for the cost of towing, preserving, and storing the vehicle, and for all notice and publication costs incurred

under this chapter. Any remainder from the proceeds of a sale must be held for the owner of the vehicle or entitled lienholder or secured parties for ninety days and then must be delivered to the administrator of the state abandoned property office in accordance with chapter 47-30.1.

**SECTION 6. AMENDMENT.** Section 39-26-02 of the North Dakota Century Code is amended and reenacted as follows:

**39-26-02. Definitions. (Contingent repeal - [See note](#))**

As used in this chapter, unless the context or subject matter otherwise requires:

1. "Abandoned motor vehicle" means a motor vehicle, as defined in section 39-01-01, that has remained for a period of more than forty-eight hours on public property illegally or lacking vital component parts, or is located on private property without consent of the person in control of such property or in an inoperable condition such that it has no substantial potential further use consistent with its usual functions unless it is kept in an enclosed garage or storage building. It also means a motor vehicle voluntarily surrendered by its owner to a person duly licensed under section 39-26-10. An antique automobile, as defined in section 39-04-10.4, and other motor vehicles to include parts car and special interest vehicles, may not be considered an abandoned motor vehicle within the meaning of this chapter.
2. "Collector" means the owner of one or more special interest vehicles who collects, purchases, acquires, trades, or disposes of special interest vehicles or parts thereof for the person's own use in order to restore, preserve, and maintain a special interest vehicle or antique vehicle.
3. "Commercial towing service" means a registered business in North Dakota that tows motor vehicles.
4. "Department" means the state department of health.
5. "Emergency towing" means the towing of a vehicle due to a motor vehicle accident, mechanical breakdown on public roadway, or other emergency-related incident necessitating vehicle removal for public safety with or without the owner's consent.
6. "Parts car" means a motor vehicle generally in nonoperable condition which is owned by the collector to furnish parts to restore, preserve, and maintain a special interest vehicle or antique vehicle.

~~6.7.~~ "Special interest vehicle" means a motor vehicle which is at least twenty years old and which has not been altered or modified from original manufacturer's specifications and, because of its historic interest, is being preserved by hobbyists.

~~7.8.~~ "Unit of government" includes a state department or agency, a county, city, township, or other political subdivision.

~~8.9.~~ "Vital component parts" means those parts of a motor vehicle that are essential to the mechanical functioning of the vehicle, including, but not limited to, the motor, drive train, and wheels.

**SECTION 7. AMENDMENT.** Section 39-26-06 of the North Dakota Century Code is amended and reenacted as follows:

**39-26-06. Notice to owner of abandoned vehicle. (Contingent repeal - [See note](#))**

1. When an abandoned motor vehicle does not fall within the provisions of section 39-26-05, the unit of government or commercial towing service taking it into custody shall give notice of the taking within ten days. The notice must set forth the date and place of the taking, the year, make, model, and serial number of the abandoned motor vehicle and the place where the vehicle is being held, must inform the owner and any lienholders or secured parties of their right to reclaim the vehicle under section 39-26-07, and must state that failure of the owner or lienholders or secured parties to exercise their right to reclaim the vehicle is deemed a waiver by them of all right, title, and interest in the vehicle and a consent to the disposal of the vehicle pursuant to section 39-26-08.
2. The notice must be sent by certified mail, return receipt requested, to the registered owner, if any, of the abandoned motor vehicle and to all readily identifiable lienholders or secured parties of record. If it is impossible to determine with reasonable certainty the identity and address of the registered owner and all lienholders, the notice must be published once in a newspaper of general circulation in the area where the motor vehicle was abandoned. Published notices may be grouped together for convenience and economy.
3. Subject to section 39-26-05, a commercial towing service that takes an abandoned motor vehicle into custody shall provide notice to the law enforcement agency having

jurisdiction in the location from which the motor vehicle was towed within twelve hours  
after completing the tow.

4. Notice under subsection 3 must include:

a. The license plate number and state of registration;

b. The location from which the motor vehicle was towed;

c. The location to which the motor vehicle was towed;

d. The name, address, and telephone number of the commercial towing service that  
towed and is storing the motor vehicle; and

e. A description of the motor vehicle, including make, model, year, and color.

5. A commercial towing service that violates subsection 3 may not collect a storage fee  
under section 39-26-07 and shall return the motor vehicle to the registered owner at  
no cost to the owner.

**SECTION 8.** A new subsection to section 39-26-07 of the North Dakota Century Code is  
created and enacted as follows:

This section also applies to emergency towing.

**SECTION 9. EMERGENCY.** This Act is declared to be an emergency measure.