



Norwich Police Department Standard Operating Procedure

Subject:	Motor-vehicle inventories	
Distribution:	All Officers & H.Q.	
Approved / By order of:	Jennifer Frank, Chief of Police	

I. PURPOSE:	<p>A motor vehicle inventory is an administrative measure designed to protect motor vehicles and their contents while in police custody; to protect the Norwich Police Department and the Town of Norwich against claims of lost, stolen or damaged property; and to protect NPD departmental personnel and the public against injury or damaged property due to hazardous materials or substances that may be in the vehicle. It is the policy of the Norwich Police Department to safeguard the above property and interests and to conduct motor vehicle inventories in accordance with the following procedures.</p> <p>The purpose of this standard operating procedure is to provide NPD officers with guidelines for determining when and how a motor vehicle inventory should be conducted. Examination of the contents of a motor vehicle pursuant to a criminal investigation or with the intent of discovering evidence of a crime is a search, not an administrative inventory. This SOP does not apply to searches conducted for the purpose of discovering evidence. NPD officers shall be guided by existing statutes and the Norwich Police Department Standard Operating Procedures on Search and Seizures when engaged in those actions.</p>
II. POLICY:	<p>A. Motor vehicles which are lawfully towed, removed, impounded or stored at the direction of police officers or placed in the custody of the police department, shall be inspected and subject to inventory according to the procedures in this policy.</p>
III. DEFINITIONS:	<p>A. Closed Container: A container which has no lock on it or which has a lock which is unlocked or for which the officer has access to a key or combination.</p> <p>B. Impound: To take into custody of the law.</p>

	<p>C. Inspection: An examination of the exterior and interior of the vehicle for damaged or missing parts.</p> <p>D. Inventory: A non-investigatory procedure during which the contents of a motor vehicle are itemized, documented and potentially stored in a secure location, and the condition of the vehicle is noted.</p> <p>E. Locked Container: A container which has a lock on it which is locked and for which the officer has no access to a key or combination.</p>
IV. PROCEDURES:	<p>A. Inventory Process:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The officer directing that a vehicle be towed, removed, impounded or stored, or the officer acting on behalf of the department in accepting custody of a vehicle; shall inspect and inventory the vehicle and its contents unless the responsibility for such has properly been transferred to another officer. 2. An inventory shall not be conducted in the following situations: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The vehicle is not to be removed and does not impede traffic flow, and is not illegally parked. b. Where the owner and/or operator is present and remains on scene until the tow company removes the vehicle. c. When the operator is arrested, and proposes that the vehicle be turned over to an identified person who is not under arrest or otherwise incapacitated and who agrees to take charge of the vehicle prior to the police department clearing the scene, if the turnover can be done in a timely manner and the vehicle is not a safety hazard or impeding vehicular traffic. <p>B. Scope of Inventory:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All vehicles lawfully impounded by the Norwich Police Department shall be subject to a routine custodial inventory. All areas within the vehicle will be checked and all pertinent contents will be recorded on the motor-vehicle inventory form for reference. The form shall include at least the following information: the vehicle's make, model, color, and registration or VIN, the circumstances in which the vehicle was towed or impounded, the name of the towing company which provided the towing service, the date, time, and location of the inventory, the name of the inventorying officer, the identity of the owner, and or, operator, a list of the personal property inventoried, and a list of all interior and exterior damage or missing parts. The form shall be signed by the inventorying officer, a representative of

the towing company, and the owner/operator. If the owner/operator refuses to sign the form acknowledging the inventory search or is unavailable or incapacitated, the officer shall note the refusal / incapacity / unavailability and the reason, if any, on the form.

2. An inventory should be conducted in the location at which the vehicle is towed from unless limited by reasons of safety or practicality. If so, it may be inventoried at a later time, but as soon as practicably possible.
3. The owner, operator, or person in lawful control of the vehicle shall be asked to remove, if possible, all valuables from the vehicle prior to impoundment. If such items cannot be removed, they shall be inventoried before the vehicle is removed, and the owner / operator / controller shall be requested to verify the completeness of the inventory by signature if available. The following items will be removed from the vehicle by the officer and placed into property for safekeeping:
 - a. All cash exceeding a total of \$100.00, coins and currency;
 - b. Jewelry which has an estimated value that exceeds \$250.00; and
 - c. Other loose individual items that cannot be secured in the trunk that have a value over \$250.00.
4. The officer shall begin by thoroughly examining the vehicle's exterior for damage and or missing parts. The officer shall then examine for damage, missing parts and personal property the vehicle's interior, including all open areas and storage areas and compartments where personal property can reasonably be expected to be found.
5. A motor vehicle inventory may extend to all areas of the vehicle in which personal property or hazardous materials may reasonably be found, including but not limited to the passenger compartment, trunk and glove compartment.
6. All closed containers found within the vehicle shall be opened for purposes of the inventory. Closed and locked containers shall not be forced open but shall be logged on the impound report as such. If a key or lock combination is available, locked containers may be opened and inventoried. If no key is found, the inventorying officer shall not open the locked container unless the officer has reasonable suspicion to believe

that the container's contents pose a safety or security threat.

7. Papers or documents found in the vehicle or within any container searched may be examined only to the extent necessary to identify the vehicle's owner / operator / controller, and / or to remove items dangerous to the storage area or personnel.

C. Property Control:

1. All items of value shall be listed on the Norwich Police Department Motor-Vehicle Inventory Form and such materials secured in the locked trunk if possible, or may be placed in the NPD property room for safekeeping.
2. While the purpose for an inspection and inventory of a motor vehicle is not to discover evidence of a crime, such evidence is admissible so long as the inventory search is conducted in accordance with this standard operating procedure. Contraband and/or evidence discovered during the course of a motor vehicle inventory shall be deposited in the evidence lockers in accordance with Norwich Police Department standard operating procedures regarding evidence. If contraband or evidence is found, a supervisor shall be notified as soon as practicably possible.