

	KENOSHA POLICE DEPARTMENT			
	POLICY AND PROCEDURE			
	1.14 Inventory Search of Motor Vehicles			
Effective Date:	5/4/2010	Revision Date:	5/4/2010	
Action:	Policy 1.10 Search and Seizure		Number of pages:	2

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide officers of the Kenosha Police Department with guidelines for conducting an Inventory Search of Motor Vehicles.

II. POLICY

It is the policy of the Kenosha Police Department to conduct Inventory Searches of all motor vehicles that are impounded and held in the Kenosha Police Department evidence bay.

III. PROCEDURE

A. *Impounding Motor Vehicles*

In the course of performing their duties, officers have many occasions requiring the removal and/or the impounding of motor vehicles. Reasons for removal or impoundment may include but not be limited to:

1. Junk vehicle removal by ordinance.
2. Vehicle is abandoned.
3. Vehicle disabled due to accident.
4. Vehicle is a traffic hazard.
5. Vehicle is or contains evidence.
6. The vehicle is recovered as stolen.
7. Vehicle is seized under forfeiture.
8. The driver/owner is arrested and vehicle cannot be legally left at the scene.

The normal course of removal or impoundment for a vehicle seized by police is to contact the appropriate towing agency and have the vehicle removed to their storage facility. In these instances the vehicle and contents will be left under the care and responsibility of the towing agency.

There will be occasions, such as when the vehicle is or contains evidence, that the vehicle will be held in the Kenosha Public Safety Building evidence bay. In these instances the appropriate warrants should be obtained to search for and recover any known or suspected evidence. After the evidence issue has been resolved the vehicle will be subject to an Inventory Search.

1.14 Inventory Search of Motor Vehicles

The intent of an Inventory Search is just that, to inventory any items or property in the vehicle in order to protect the officer from claims of theft, to protect the automobile owner's property, and to protect the integrity of the impound area. Although items discovered in an Inventory Search are admissible in court, an Inventory Search cannot be used in an attempt to circumvent the warrant requirement for the search and seizure of evidence.

It is necessary that an officer have a justifiable reason to impound a vehicle. An officer may not impound a person's car just because they are arrested. You must consider whether the location and circumstances would reasonably allow the car to be left on the street or in a public parking area.

B. Inventory of Vehicles

An inventory of an automobile will be done when the automobile is legally impounded in the Kenosha Public Safety Building evidence bay. An inventory indicates that the items in the car are inventoried and a written record of property within the vehicle will be created.

The scope of an inventory search shall include the areas which can be readily entered. The glove compartment, console, and trunk, whether locked or not, are within the scope of this search. Containers found in the vehicle shall be opened if the content cannot be determined without opening them. The inventory search shall be conducted in a manner to avoid any unnecessary damage to the vehicle or its contents

Vehicles that have been lawfully impounded at the Kenosha Public Safety Building are to be inventoried as soon as practicable when it may be conducted without risking loss or damage to evidence. Officers must be aware that an inventory of an automobile is just that, and not an investigatory search for evidence. Evidence discovered while legally doing an inventory is admissible in court but an inventory search cannot be used to circumvent the need for a warrant when searching for evidence.

C. Inventory Search Procedure

The actual search procedure for an inventory search must be methodical and complete. The method is up to the preference of the individual officer conducting the search; however, it is recommended that officers begin at the front bumper area and carefully work through the vehicle to the rear assuring every practical area is searched. A written log of items located in the vehicle must be created and maintained.