



August 31, 2023

**Registration and Title Bulletin # 007-23
Policy and Procedure**

TO: All County Tax Assessor-Collectors and Law Enforcement

SUBJECT: Unclaimed Seized Vehicle Sale Procedures

PURPOSE

The purpose of this bulletin is to provide guidance on title processing pertaining to unclaimed vehicles originally seized by law enforcement.

DETAILS

Vehicles seized by a law enforcement agency may not always be disposed of through the seizure process outlined in Chapter 59 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. In these instances, Article 18.17 of the Code of Criminal Procedure provides an alternate means for disposition of vehicles. Article 18.17 establishes certain notice requirements to the owner prior to the disposition of the vehicle.

Effective immediately, the *Sales Receipt for Unclaimed Seized Vehicle* (Form VTR-71-8) may be used to transfer motor vehicles originally seized by law enforcement and deemed by law enforcement to be unclaimed under Article 18.17 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. The process may only be completed by a person designated by a municipality, which includes an officer or employee of a municipality responsible for the disposition, a county purchasing agent, or the county sheriff if the county does not have a county purchasing agent.

If a vehicle is seized by law enforcement and remains unclaimed for a period of at least 30 days, notification by certified mail must be made to the last known address of the vehicle owner notifying the owner of the requirement to claim the vehicle within 90 days of the notice or the vehicle will be disposed of. If the owner's name or address is unknown and the vehicle's value is \$500 or more, this initial notice must be made by newspaper publication. If the owner's name or address is unknown and the vehicle's value is less than \$500, the vehicle may be sold or donated without any notice.

Notification by newspaper publication is required at least 14 days prior to the date of sale for all vehicles with a value of \$500 or more. If the owner does not claim the vehicle within 90 days from the date of the initial notice or newspaper publication, the vehicle may be disposed of by being sold, donated, or retained for law enforcement agency use.

If a vehicle is seized by law enforcement and the owner is taken into custody, law enforcement must notify the owner at the time they are taken into custody or released that the owner must claim the vehicle within 30 days of being released or the vehicle will be disposed of. If the vehicle is unclaimed by the owner, the vehicle may be disposed of without any further notice. Form VTR-71-8 may be used as ownership evidence when completing a title transfer for a motor vehicle that was seized by law enforcement and unclaimed by the vehicle owner. For the form to



be used as valid ownership evidence, the timeline and appropriate notices must be made per Article 18.17 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. If the notice procedures are not followed, Form VTR-71-8 may not be used to transfer title. In such cases, title applicants can be informed they may pursue a bonded title. Proof of title and registration verification, determination of the vehicle value and notifications to the motor vehicle owner are not required to be submitted with the form and application for title.

Form VTR-71-8 is attached and will be available on the department's website. The *Motor Vehicle Title Manual* will be updated with this new process in the next quarterly revision.

COUNTY ACTION

Begin accepting the completed *Sales Receipt for Unclaimed Seized Vehicle* (Form VTR-71-8) as ownership evidence for vehicles seized by law enforcement and not claimed by the vehicle owner. Select "Other" as the ownership evidence type when processing a title application in the Registration and Title System. If the timeline and notice requirements were not met based on the dates provided on the form, inform the purchaser they may pursue a bonded title.

CONTACT

If you have any questions, please contact your local Texas Department of Motor Vehicles Regional Service Center.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "A. Quintero".

Annette Quintero, Director
Vehicle Titles and Registration Division
Texas Department of Motor Vehicles