

 <p>GENERAL ORDER</p>	Effective: 08-31-2022	# 09-06
	Section: Operations	Replaces or Modifies: GO #09-06 (10-21-2021)
	Title: Vehicle-Property Inventories	
Issued by: Chief Deputy Mattie Provost		

Purpose:

To establish guidelines for inventories conducted of vehicles and property found in vehicles.

Policy:

During the course of Law Enforcement duties there are times when this Agency takes possession, control, or custody of vehicles and property in vehicles as a result of police and general caretaker functions. It is the policy of the Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office to conduct an inventory of these types of vehicles and property to protect the owner's property; protect this Agency and its employees from claims of loss, theft, and/or destruction of property; and to protect employees from potential danger.

Definitions:

Abandoned Motor Vehicle – As defined in Texas Transportation Code Section 683.002

Non-consent tow – any tow of a motor vehicle that is not a consent

tow, including:

- a. an incident management tow; and
- b. a private property tow.

Procedure:

- I. When arrests are made and as a matter of lawful authority the FBCSO has care, custody, and/or control over a vehicle due to the arrest (one example is a DWI arrest and vehicle is to be towed to a storage facility) – an inventory of all items inside the vehicle shall be conducted.
 - A. Inventories shall include all compartments and parts of the vehicle along with items within the vehicle (examples include but are not limited to gloveboxes, consoles, trunks, beds of pickups, containers [locked and unlocked]).
 - B. Inventories shall also document the condition of the vehicle – property.
 - C. Personal property of value must be inventoried and added to inmate property, or placed in the property room.
- II. Other instances when procedures in Section I above apply:
 - A. Vehicles towed from an accident scene in a non-consensual manner.
 - B. Vehicles towed as a result of being found abandoned, blocking roadways, and/or declared a public nuisance shall be inventoried.
 - C. Vehicles coming into Agency custody as a result of general caretaker functions.
- III. In situations where the reason for taking custody of a vehicle is primarily related to searching it in regards to an investigation, then Laws concerning Search and Seizure shall be followed.
- IV. Inventory procedures:
 - A. Inventories shall be thorough; however, actions that are reasonably seen to have the potential to damage property are not authorized.

- B. In cases of locked compartments, containers, etc... an effort to locate a key shall be made. If no key is available there is not a general requirement to attempt to enter locked items. If entry is not made, the reason(s) shall be documented in writing.
- C. Any inability to inventory a vehicle or part of a vehicle shall be documented in writing.

V. Safety Precautions:

- A. Employees are to pay particular attention to items associated with the manufacture of certain drugs that have a potential to cause an explosion/fire when handled. If any of these items are discovered supervisory personnel shall be summoned, and advice on handling items of this nature obtained from FBCSO Narcotics personnel.
- B. In addition, when handling any drugs, precautions including the wearing of personal protective equipment (PPE) such as gloves shall be taken.
- C. If reasonable suspicion is developed to believe a locked component or container may contain a dangerous item and there is no ability to unlock the component or container without damaging it, supervisory personnel shall be summoned and appropriate actions taken to minimize risks and/or obtain entry through legal means (an example includes obtaining a search warrant).

VI. Specific Duties:

- A. The duty to inventory resides with the Deputy initiating the action of taking care, custody, and/or control over a vehicle-property. Another Deputy may assume the role of conducting an inventory upon request of the initiating Deputy.
- B. Anytime an inventory is conducted under authority of this General Order, an Offense or Incident report will be filed in the FBCSO's records management system (RMS) when applicable.
 - 1. In addition to this reporting requirement an approved FBCSO Vehicle Inventory will be completed on all inventories conducted pursuant to authority in this General Order. An employee completing this form shall take all reasonable steps to ensure that the form is completed by accurately documenting all requested information in a legible manner.
- C. Generally, items found inside a vehicle will be inventoried and left with the vehicle. Exceptions to this are:
 - 1. Contraband/illegal items found will be seized and processed as evidence.
 - 2. Cell phones may be placed in prisoner property (if ownership is reasonably established).
 - 3. Personal effects (wallets, purses, cash, jewelry, prescription medication, ipad, laptop, etc.). Personal property that is not contraband is to be inventoried and submitted to the property room for safekeeping. If ownership is to be determined later, a property hearing may be necessary.
 - 4. Other items may be, on a case-by-case basis, determined to necessitate special handling considerations as approved by a supervisor.

Reference Information:

Texas Transportation Code Section 683.002
Texas Occupations Code 2308.002

Only the Sheriff or Chief Deputy may authorize exceptions to this General Order.