
	LOWER MERION TOWNSHIP POLICE DEPARTMENT Ardmore, Pennsylvania	
	Policy 3.7.6	
Subject:		Distribution:
Abandoned/Disabled Vehicles		All Personnel
Date of Issue:	Expiration Date:	Rescinds:
06-01-2014	Until Amended or Rescinded	Directive: 08-9
References:		
CALEA: 61.4.1, 61.4.3; PLEAC: N/A		
By Authority of:		
		Superintendent of Police

PURPOSE

This is to establish a uniform procedure regarding the processing of abandoned vehicle incidents.

POLICY

Abandoned vehicles are a potential safety issue, are targets of vandalism, and negatively impact the quality of life in the community. Therefore, it shall be the policy of this Department to actively seek out, investigate, and promptly remove all qualifying vehicles located in the Township.

DEFINITIONS

A. AUTHORIZATION UNDER PA VEHICLE CODE § 3712, ABANDONMENT OF VEHICLES

No person shall abandon a vehicle on any highway. No person shall abandon a vehicle on public or private property without the express or implied consent of the owner or person in lawful possession or control of the property.

B. ABANDONED VEHICLE

1. A vehicle (other than a pedalcycle) shall be presumed to be abandoned under any of the following circumstances:

a. The vehicle is physically inoperable and is left unattended on a highway or other public property for more than 48 hours.

b. The vehicle has remained illegally on a highway or other public property for a period of more than 48 hours.

- c. The vehicle is left unattended on or along a highway or other public property for more than 48 hours and does not bear all of the following:
 - 1) A valid registration plate.
 - 2) A current certificate of inspection.
 - 3) An ascertainable VIN (Vehicle Identification Number).
 - d. The vehicle has remained on private property without the consent of the owner or person in control of the property for more than 24 hours.
2. Vehicles and equipment used, or to be used in construction, or in the operation or maintenance of highways or public utility facilities, which are left in a manner which does not interfere with the normal movement of traffic, shall not be considered to be abandoned.

PROCEDURE (CALEA 61.4.3a)

- A. When a report of an abandoned vehicle is received, a complaint will be initiated and an officer will be dispatched to investigate the vehicle. If an officer observes a suspected abandoned vehicle, he/she will initiate the complaint and conduct the investigation.
- B. The officer will fully investigate, (registration number, VIN, inspection stickers, and neighborhood check), to ascertain ownership. If ownership is established, the owner will be informed by Certified Mail that the vehicle has been declared abandoned and will be towed by this Department if not removed within ten (10) days of the date reported as "Abandoned".
- C. If ownership can be established, whether the vehicle displays an out-of-state plate or no plate at all, the investigating officers and their supervisors will adhere to the following procedure:
 - 1. An "Abandoned Vehicle" sticker ([TSU-15](#)) shall be placed on the vehicle's windshield, or on another conspicuous place on vehicles without windshields.
 - 2. Once the listing is obtained, a preprinted letter will be completed in duplicate (Form [TSU-14](#)). Address the mailing envelope, place the original letter in it, and seal the envelope. The duplicate letter will be forwarded to the Records Section for scanning into the Alert system.
 - 3. Attach a "Certified Mail" sticker (PS 3800) to the top of the mailing envelope, to the right of the return address. The "Receipt" portion shall be discarded. The envelope will be forwarded to the Records Section for mailing as soon as possible to ensure a timely notification.

4. The 20-digit Certified Mail Receipt number shall be recorded in the narrative of the report for tracking purposes.
 5. Report Review will be responsible for possession of an ample supply of preprinted Abandoned Vehicle Letters (Form [TSU-14](#)), Certified Mail stickers, envelopes, and Abandoned Vehicle stickers.
- D. If ownership cannot be established for some reason (missing VIN & Tag, etc.) the reporting officer shall indicate such in the report and include as much descriptive information as possible. The issuance of an Abandoned Vehicle letter is negated at this point.
- E. If the registration plate and VIN indicate different ownership, the Abandoned Vehicle Letter ([TSU-14](#)) will be sent to both the subject listed to the VIN and the last registered owner.
1. The names and addresses of both the tag and VIN registrants shall be included in the report.
- F. Vehicles reported as abandoned on Private Property will also be investigated. **(CALEA 61.4.3a)**
1. The investigation must be initiated at the request of the property owner or his/her authorized representative. The name, address and telephone number of the authorized reporting party shall be included in the Alert report.
 2. Vehicles reported as Abandoned on Private Property need only to be on the property without the consent of the property owner, regardless of its mechanical condition, registration, inspection or insurance status.

TRAFFIC SAFETY UNIT RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. If the vehicle has not been removed at the end of 10 days from the original incident, the Traffic Safety Unit will inspect the vehicle and notify an authorized salvor to take possession of the vehicle. The Traffic Safety Unit may then prosecute the owner for violation of Section 3712 of the Vehicle Code.
- B. After the vehicle has been towed by the salvor, the Traffic Safety Unit will complete a Supplementary Report noting the name and address of the salvor. PennDOT form MV-952 will be completed by the Traffic Safety Unit for every vehicle towed by the salvor. PennDOT form MV-952PP will be completed in addition to the MV-952 when the vehicle has been reported abandoned on private property. The originals will be forwarded to the salvor. Copies will be filed in the Traffic Safety Unit along with digital photographs of all towed vehicles. A copy of the MV-952PP shall also be mailed to the property owner in private property incidents.

- C. The Traffic Safety Unit will maintain a database of all vehicles reported as abandoned, specifying whether they were towed on order of the Police Department or removed by some other action. **(CALEA 61.4.3c)**

MISCELLANEOUS

- A. If a vehicle meets the abandoned vehicle criteria, the normal Abandoned Vehicle Procedure shall be followed regardless of its location, with a report generated in Alert. No abandoned vehicle shall be classified as merely “Disabled”.
- B. Abandoned Vehicle Notification Stickers shall not be placed on any vehicle unless and until a complaint has been initiated. Placing Abandoned Stickers on vehicles that meet the criteria without generating a report often leads to the vehicle simply being moved in the same condition to another public location.
- C. In the event that the condition or location of a vehicle requires its immediate removal, the assigned local towing agency shall be contacted to remove it to their place of business. Two Township Tow Letters ([TSU-25](#)) are to be completed by the Investigating officer. One of the letters shall be sent by certified mail to the registered owner as notification of the vehicle's removal. The other letter is to be submitted with the report for scanning into the Alert reporting system. **(CALEA 61.4.3b)**
 - 1. If the vehicle remains unclaimed on the property of the towing agency the towing agent may request the vehicle to be considered as “Abandoned”. The Private Property Abandoned Procedure shall then apply. The initial Incident Number shall be included for reference in the narrative of the Abandoned Vehicle report.
- D. The Auxiliary Services Unit will maintain records of all Township Tow Letters ([TSU-25](#)) that have been sent to registered vehicle owners. **(CALEA 61.4.3c)**

VIOLATION OF TOWNSHIP CODE 145 - 62. SNOW EMERGENCY

- A. Any vehicle left unattended upon any public street, during a declared snow emergency, and which constitute a hazard or which obstructs or interferes with the orderly, effective, and adequate removal or plowing of snow may be immediately towed.
- B. The investigating officer shall immediately attempt to notify the owner of such vehicle of its removal and impoundment. Two Township Tow Letters ([TSU-25](#)) are to be completed by the Investigating officer. One of the letters shall be sent by certified mail to the registered owner within twelve (12) hours after the time of the vehicle's removal. The other letter is to be submitted with the report for scanning into the Alert reporting system.
- C. The Platoon Supervisor will forward the ALERT incident number and letter to the Traffic Safety Unit for the follow-up and final disposition.

Assistance to Highway Users

- A.** Assistance to highway users shall be given at all times when requested and when reasonable. Requested assistance may include directions to streets, highways, hotels, and restaurants in the area. **(CALEA 61.4.1a)**
- B.** Police Officers shall be alert for motorists who may be stranded or disabled and shall respond to calls to assist motorists in this condition.
1. If mechanical assistance or towing is required, the officer shall assist the motorist with contacting appropriate assistance. **(CALEA 61.4.1b)**
 2. If the vehicle is disabled in a location that makes it a hazard to other traffic, the officer shall have County Dispatch make immediate contact with the appropriate company on the department tow list for the purpose of having the vehicle removed. Officers shall remain at the scene until it is removed for the purpose of warning other motorists and protecting the vehicle and its occupants.
 3. Officers are permitted to jump-start disabled vehicles. However, Officers **MUST** first turn off the Auxiliary Power Switch of the vehicle before attempting. If the Auxiliary Power Switch is left in the on position and the vehicle is used to jump-start another, severe electrical damage may occur.
 4. Officers may transport a stranded motorist to a safe location with the approval of the shift supervisor. **(CALEA 61.4.1c)**
- C.** In cases where emergency medical or fire assistance is needed, it shall be summoned without delay. **(CALEA 61.4.1d)**
1. In the case of a medical emergency, first aid shall be provided within the scope of the officer's training. The officer shall remain at the scene protecting the patient until the arrival of EMS.
 2. In the case of a fire emergency, officers should utilize a fire extinguisher if available and if practical. Upon the arrival of fire apparatus, the officer shall remain at the scene and provide assistance as needed until the hazard has been removed.

RESPONSIBILITY

It is the responsibility of all supervisory personnel to ensure that all personnel under their immediate supervision comply with this policy.

This page intentionally left blank.