

MESA POLICE Department Policy Manual	Vehicle Inventory	DPM 2.7.45 Effective 04/06/2012 Revised 09/29/2021
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1. PURPOSE

This policy establishes guidelines and procedures for motor vehicle inventories. It is the policy of the Mesa Police Department (MPD) that motor vehicles which are lawfully towed, removed, impounded, or stored at the direction of a MPD member, or placed in the custody of the Department, shall be inspected and inventoried according to the procedures set forth in this policy.

2. DEFINITIONS

Impound: To take into custody of the law.

Inspection: An examination of all areas of the vehicle in which personal property may reasonably be found including, but not limited to, the passenger compartment, trunk, and glove/map box.

Motor Vehicle Inventory: A motor vehicle inventory is an administrative measure designed to:

- Protect the motor vehicle as well as any personal property contained in such vehicle.
- Protect the police and tow contractor against claims arising from property allegedly damaged, lost or stolen while in police custody; and
- Protect Department members and the public from injury or property damage due to dangerous items or substances that may be contained in the vehicle.

3. GENERAL

- A. This policy and the following procedures do not apply to searches conducted for the purpose of discovering evidence.
- B. Refer to [DPM 2.2.30 Search of Vehicle](#) when the examination of a motor vehicle or its contents is conducted for investigatory purposes.

4. PROCEDURES

4.1 Vehicle Inventories

- A. Motor vehicle inventories are conducted when vehicles are impounded pursuant to MPD policy, including but not limited to [DPM 2.7.35 Towing](#) and [DPM 2.7.40 20-Day Impound Tow](#).

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- B. When a vehicle is impounded, the impounding officer shall conduct an itemized inventory of the vehicle for personal property and place all property of value into safekeeping according to [DPM 3.2.45 Impounding Evidence & Property](#) and [DPM 3.2.50 Impounding Evidence & Property-Special Handling](#).
- C. Any containers, whose contents cannot be determined from the container's exterior, found in the vehicle shall be opened and all contents of such containers shall be inventoried.
- D. A locked glove compartment, locked trunk or other locked compartment shall be opened, and the contents be inventoried.
 1. If available, use key to open rather than force.

5. CONCLUSION

- A. Warrantless inventory searches of vehicles have been upheld when conducted according to established Department procedures, and not used as a subterfuge for avoiding warrant requirements.
- B. The Supreme Court has ruled that evidence of a crime uncovered during an inventory search can be used for prosecution.
 1. A warrant is not required because the State, in legally impounding the vehicles, bears legal liability for the contents of the vehicle.
 2. To protect itself against the lawsuits, the State must have a written list of these contents.

REFERENCES

- [DPM 3.2.45 Impounding Evidence & Property](#)
- [DPM 2.2.30 Search of Vehicle](#)
- [DPM 3.2.50 Impounding Evidence & Property-Special Handling](#)
- [DPM 2.7.35 Towing](#)
- [DPM 2.7.40 20-Day Impound Tow](#)