


Haverford Township Police Department Operations Manual		
Issue Date February 2021	Review Date February 2022	Directive Number 6.2.13
Accreditation Index: 1.2.3		Rescinds: Directive 6.2.13 of November 2019
Section: Six – General Procedures		Chapter: One – Organization and Management
Chief of Police: <i>John F. Viola</i>		

SUBJECT: INVENTORY SEARCH OF VEHICLES

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this directive is to establish procedures to be followed by the Haverford Township Police Department for the use of inventory searches of vehicles seized, confiscated or otherwise taken into custody through official department actions in keeping with our community caretaking function.

II. POLICY

It shall be the policy of the Haverford Township Police Department that an inventory search of vehicles be conducted when a vehicle is seized, confiscated or otherwise taken into custody through official department actions. Inventory searches shall be done for the protection of the owner's property while it remains in police custody; the protection of the police against claims or disputes over lost or stolen property; and the protection of the police from potential danger. An inventory search shall not be conducted if the sole purpose is in furtherance of an investigatory end.

(PLEAC 1.2.3 e)

III. DEFINITIONS

High value – items that have a higher than normal tendency to be stolen. This definition does not necessarily require the item to have a high monetary value, rather it relates more to the criminally desirous nature of the item. Some of these items are, but not limited to; computers, smart-phones, small electronics, televisions, jewelry, cash in access of ten dollars, credit or gift cards, etc.

Inventory Search - *...In the interests of public safety and as part of what the Court has called "community caretaking functions," (cite omitted),*

automobiles are frequently taken into police custody. When vehicles are impounded, local police departments generally follow a routine practice of securing and inventorying the automobiles' contents. These procedures developed in response to three distinct needs: the protection of the owner's property while it remains in police custody, (cite omitted); the protection of the police against claims or disputes over lost or stolen property, (cite omitted); and the protection of the police from potential danger, (cite omitted). The practice has been viewed as essential to respond to incidents of theft or vandalism...

- taken from U.S. Supreme Court Opinion in South Dakota v. Opperman 428 U.S. 364, 369 (1976)

IV. PROCEDURES

- A. Inventory searches shall not be conducted solely for the purpose of obtaining incriminating evidence or contraband. However, any evidence discovered during the inventory search shall be seized and may be used as probable cause to obtain a warrant to fully search the vehicle.
- B. Inventory searches shall be made of every vehicle seized, confiscated or otherwise taken into custody through official department actions with the following exceptions:
 - 1. Abandoned Vehicle and/or Township Related Tow
 - a) In both cases the reporting officer shall ensure that if the duty tow or police are required to open the vehicle so that it can be towed/ removed an inventory search of the vehicle is conducted in accordance with Directive # 1.2.3 Search and Seizure with and without a warrant.
 - (1) If the towed vehicle is locked /secure and not opened than an inventory search shall not be done. The reporting officer shall document in his report anything of clear value that can be seen from the exterior.
- C. Inventory searches shall be reasonable and restricted to those locations where items of value would normally be stored.
- D. Locked compartments or containers shall not be inventory searched if no keys are available.
- E. The contents removed from the vehicle shall be recorded on a property receipt. Procedures outlined in Directive 3.5.2 Evidence Control shall be followed.

- F. It shall be the responsibility of the Evidence Custodian or the officer securing the property to make the necessary contacts to insure the property is returned to the rightful owner. The property receipt shall be signed by the person to whom the property is being released.
- G. Inventory searches shall be conducted regardless of where the vehicle is impounded.

BY ORDER OF THE CHIEF OF POLICE