

Chapter 63.32 RCW
UNCLAIMED PROPERTY IN HANDS OF CITY POLICE

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RCW 63.32.010 Methods of disposition—Notice—Sale, retention, destruction, or trade. Whenever any personal property shall come into the possession of the police authorities of any city in connection with the official performance of their duties and said personal property shall remain unclaimed or not taken away for a period of sixty days from date of written notice to the owner thereof, if known, which notice shall inform the owner of the disposition which may be made of the property under this section and the time that the owner has to claim the property and in all other cases for a period of sixty days from the time said property came into the possession of the police department, unless said property has been held as evidence in any court, then, in that event, after sixty days from date when said case has been finally disposed of and said property released as evidence by order of the court, said city may:

(1) At any time thereafter sell said personal property at public auction to the highest and best bidder for cash in the manner hereinafter provided;

(2) Retain the property for the use of the police department subject to giving notice in the manner prescribed in RCW 63.32.020 and the right of the owner, or the owner's legal representative, to reclaim the property within one year after receipt of notice, without compensation for ordinary wear and tear if, in the opinion of the chief of police, the property consists of firearms or other items specifically usable in law enforcement work: PROVIDED, That at the end of each calendar year during which there has been such a retention, the police department shall provide the city's mayor or council and retain for public inspection a list of such retained items and an estimation of each item's replacement value. At the end of the one-year period any unclaimed firearm shall be disposed of pursuant to RCW 9.41.098(2);

(3) Destroy an item of personal property at the discretion of the chief of police if the chief of police determines that the following circumstances have occurred:

(a) The property has no substantial commercial value, or the probable cost of sale exceeds the value of the property;

(b) The item has been unclaimed by any person after notice procedures have been met, as prescribed in this section; and

(c) The chief of police has determined that the item is unsafe and unable to be made safe for use by any member of the general public;

(4) If the item is not unsafe or illegal to possess or sell, such item, after satisfying the notice requirements as prescribed in RCW 63.32.020, may be offered by the chief of police to bona fide dealers, in trade for law enforcement equipment, which equipment shall be treated as retained property for purpose of annual listing requirements of subsection (2) of this section; or

(5) If the item is not unsafe or illegal to possess or sell, but has been, or may be used, in the judgment of the chief of police, in a manner that is illegal, such item may be destroyed. [1988 c 223 § 3; 1988 c 132 § 1; 1981 c 154 § 2; 1973 1st ex.s. c 44 § 1; 1939 c 148 § 1; 1925 ex.s. c 100 § 1; RRS § 8999-1.]

Reviser's note: This section was amended by 1988 c 132 § 1 and by 1988 c 223 § 3, each without reference to the other. Both amendments are incorporated in the publication of this section pursuant to RCW 1.12.025(2). For rule of construction, see RCW 1.12.025(1).

RCW 63.32.020 Notice of sale. Before said personal property shall be sold, a notice of such sale fixing the time and place thereof which shall be at a suitable place, which will be noted in the advertisement for sale, and containing a description of the property to be sold shall be published at least once in the official newspaper of said city at least ten days prior to the date fixed for said sale. The notice shall be signed by the chief or other head of the police department of such city. If the owner fails to reclaim said property prior to the time fixed for the sale in such notice, the chief or other head of the police department shall conduct said sale and sell the property described in the notice at public auction to the highest and best bidder for cash, and upon payment of the amount of such bid shall deliver the said property to such bidder. [1988 c 132 § 2; 1925 ex.s. c 100 § 2; RRS § 8999-2.]

RCW 63.32.030 Disposition of proceeds. The moneys arising from sales under the provisions of this chapter shall be first applied to the payment of the costs and expenses of the sale and then to the payment of lawful charges and expenses for the keep of said personal property and the balance, if any, shall be paid into the police pension fund of said city if such fund exists; otherwise into the city current expense fund. [1939 c 148 § 2; 1925 ex.s. c 100 § 3; RRS § 8999-3.]

RCW 63.32.040 Reimbursement to owner. If the owner of said personal property so sold, or his or her legal representative, shall, at any time within three years after such money shall have been deposited in said police pension fund or the city current expense fund, furnish satisfactory evidence to the police pension fund board or the city treasurer of said city of the ownership of said personal property, he or she shall be entitled to receive from said police pension fund or city current expense fund the amount so deposited therein with interest. [2012 c 117 § 182; 1939 c 148 § 3; 1925 ex.s. c 100 § 4; RRS § 899-4.]

RCW 63.32.050 Donation of unclaimed personal property to nonprofit charitable organizations. In addition to any other method of disposition of unclaimed property provided under this chapter, the police authorities of a city or town may donate unclaimed personal property to nonprofit charitable organizations. A nonprofit charitable organization receiving personal property donated under this section must use the property, or its proceeds, to benefit needy persons. Such organization must qualify for tax-exempt status under 26 U.S.C. Sec. 501(c)(3) of the federal internal revenue code. [2007 c 219 § 1; 1987 c 182 § 1.]

Severability—1987 c 182: "If any provision of this act or its application to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the remainder of the act or the application of the provision to other persons or circumstances is not affected." [1987 c 182 § 3.]

RCW 63.32.060 Duties of police department or designated alternate entity accepting found property. (1) This chapter does not modify the requirements for a police department to accept found property under chapter 63.21 RCW.

(2) If a city or town designates an alternate department or governmental entity to accept found property under RCW 63.21.090:

(a) The designated department or governmental entity shall comply with the retention and disposition requirements under this chapter in the same manner as would be required of a police department; and

(b) The police department is not required to accept found property from a finder of said property, unless the property is any of the following: A bank card; charge or credit card; cash; government-issued document, financial document, or legal document; firearm; evidence in a judicial or other official proceeding; or an item that is not legal for the finder to possess. Such found property accepted by a police department must be retained or disposed of in accordance with this chapter and other applicable state laws. [2020 c 26 § 16.]

Intent—2020 c 26: See note following RCW 63.21.090.