

609.531 FORFEITURES.

Subdivision 1. **Definitions.** For the purpose of sections 609.531 to 609.5318, the following terms have the meanings given them.

(a) "Conveyance device" means a device used for transportation and includes, but is not limited to, a motor vehicle, trailer, snowmobile, airplane, and vessel and any equipment attached to it. The term "conveyance device" does not include property which is, in fact, itself stolen or taken in violation of the law.

(b) "Weapon used" means a dangerous weapon as defined under section 609.02, subdivision 6, that the actor used or had in possession in furtherance of a crime.

(c) "Property" means property as defined in section 609.52, subdivision 1, clause (1).

(d) "Contraband" means property which is illegal to possess under Minnesota law.

(e) "Appropriate agency" means the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, the Department of Commerce Division of Insurance Fraud Prevention, the Minnesota Division of Driver and Vehicle Services, the Minnesota State Patrol, a county sheriff's department, the Three Rivers Park District park rangers, the Department of Natural Resources Division of Enforcement, the University of Minnesota Police Department, the Department of Corrections Fugitive Apprehension Unit, or a city, metropolitan transit, or airport police department.

(f) "Designated offense" includes:

(1) for weapons used: any violation of this chapter, chapter 152, or chapter 624;

(2) for driver's license or identification card transactions: any violation of section 171.22; and

(3) for all other purposes: a felony violation of, or a felony-level attempt or conspiracy to violate, section 325E.17; 325E.18; 609.185; 609.19; 609.195; 609.21; 609.221; 609.222; 609.223; 609.2231; 609.24; 609.245; 609.25; 609.255; 609.282; 609.283; 609.322; 609.342, subdivision 1, clauses (a) to (f); 609.343, subdivision 1, clauses (a) to (f); 609.344, subdivision 1, clauses (a) to (e), and (h) to (j); 609.345, subdivision 1, clauses (a) to (e), and (h) to (j); 609.352; 609.42; 609.425; 609.466; 609.485; 609.487; 609.52; 609.525; 609.527; 609.528; 609.53; 609.54; 609.551; 609.561; 609.562; 609.563; 609.582; 609.59; 609.595; 609.611; 609.631; 609.66, subdivision 1e; 609.671, subdivisions 3, 4, 5, 8, and 12; 609.687; 609.821; 609.825; 609.86; 609.88; 609.89; 609.893; 609.895; 617.246; 617.247; or a gross misdemeanor or felony violation of section 609.891 or 624.7181; or any violation of section 609.324.

(g) "Controlled substance" has the meaning given in section 152.01, subdivision 4.

Subd. 1a. **Construction.** Sections 609.531 to 609.5318 must be liberally construed to carry out the following remedial purposes:

- (1) to enforce the law;
- (2) to deter crime;
- (3) to reduce the economic incentive to engage in criminal enterprise;
- (4) to increase the pecuniary loss resulting from the detection of criminal activity; and
- (5) to forfeit property unlawfully used or acquired and divert the property to law enforcement purposes.

Subd. 2. [Repealed, 1988 c 665 s 17]

Subd. 3. [Repealed, 1988 c 665 s 17]

Subd. 4. **Seizure.** Property subject to forfeiture under sections 609.531 to 609.5318 may be seized by the appropriate agency upon process issued by any court having jurisdiction over the property. Property may be seized without process if:

- (1) the seizure is incident to a lawful arrest or a lawful search;
- (2) the property subject to seizure has been the subject of a prior judgment in favor of the state in a criminal injunction or forfeiture proceeding under this chapter; or
- (3) the appropriate agency has probable cause to believe that the delay occasioned by the necessity to obtain process would result in the removal or destruction of the property and that:
 - (i) the property was used or is intended to be used in commission of a felony; or
 - (ii) the property is dangerous to health or safety.

If property is seized without process under item (i), the county attorney must institute a forfeiture action under section 609.5313 as soon as is reasonably possible.

Subd. 5. **Right to possession vests immediately; custody of seized property.** All right, title, and interest in property subject to forfeiture under sections 609.531 to 609.5318 vests in the appropriate agency upon commission of the act or omission giving rise to the forfeiture. Any property seized under sections 609.531 to 609.5318 is not subject to replevin, but is deemed to be in the custody of the appropriate agency subject to the orders and decrees of the court having jurisdiction over the forfeiture proceedings. When property is so seized, the appropriate agency may:

- (1) place the property under seal;

(2) remove the property to a place designated by it;

(3) in the case of controlled substances, require the state Board of Pharmacy to take custody of the property and remove it to an appropriate location for disposition in accordance with law; and

(4) take other steps reasonable and necessary to secure the property and prevent waste.

Subd. 5a. **Bond by owner for possession.** (a) If the owner of property that has been seized under sections 609.531 to 609.5318 seeks possession of the property before the forfeiture action is determined, the owner may, subject to the approval of the appropriate agency, give security or post bond payable to the appropriate agency in an amount equal to the retail value of the seized property. On posting the security or bond, the seized property must be returned to the owner and the forfeiture action shall proceed against the security as if it were the seized property. This subdivision does not apply to contraband property.

(b) If the owner of a motor vehicle that has been seized under this section seeks possession of the vehicle before the forfeiture action is determined, the owner may surrender the vehicle's certificate of title in exchange for the vehicle. The motor vehicle must be returned to the owner within 24 hours if the owner surrenders the motor vehicle's certificate of title to the appropriate agency, pending resolution of the forfeiture action. If the certificate is surrendered, the owner may not be ordered to post security or bond as a condition of release of the vehicle. When a certificate of title is surrendered under this provision, the agency shall notify the Department of Public Safety and any secured party noted on the certificate. The agency shall also notify the department and the secured party when it returns a surrendered title to the motor vehicle owner.

Subd. 6. [Repealed, 1988 c 665 s 17]

Subd. 6a. **Forfeiture a civil procedure; conviction results in presumption.** (a) An action for forfeiture is a civil in rem action and is independent of any criminal prosecution, except as provided in this subdivision and section 609.5318. The appropriate agency handling the forfeiture has the benefit of the evidentiary presumption of section 609.5314, subdivision 1, but otherwise bears the burden of proving the act or omission giving rise to the forfeiture by clear and convincing evidence, except that in cases arising under section 609.5312, the designated offense may only be established by a criminal conviction.

(b) A court may not issue an order of forfeiture under section 609.5311 while the alleged owner of the property is in custody and related criminal proceedings are pending against the alleged owner. For forfeiture of a motor vehicle, the alleged owner is the registered owner according to records of the Department of Public Safety. For real property, the alleged owner is the owner of record. For other property, the alleged owner is the person notified by the prosecuting authority in filing the forfeiture action.

History: 1984 c 625 s 1; 1985 c 160 s 2; 1Sp1985 c 16 art 2 s 15; 1986 c 351 s 17; 1986 c 444; 1986 c 446 s 4; 1987 c 267 s 2; 1988 c 665 s 5-10; 1988 c 712 s 8; 1989 c 95 s 1; 1989 c 290 art 3 s 29; 1989 c 305 s 4; 1990 c 494 s 2; 1991 c 199 art 1 s 85; 1991 c 323 s 1; 1991 c 347 art 3 s 3; 1993 c 221 s 6; 1993 c 326 art 1 s 5; art 4 s 27,28; 1994 c 636 art 3 s 11; 1999 c 142 s 1; 1999 c 244 s 3; 2000 c 354 s 5; 2004 c 295 art 1 s 16; 2005 c 82 s 12; 2005 c 136 art 13 s 8; art 17 s 37; 2008 c 287 art 1 s 112; 2008 c 363 art 6 s 10