

Impounded and Stored Vessels

SCOPE

This Station Order establishes policy and procedure for the impounding and storing of vessels. This order addresses the necessary paperwork and verbiage needed for impounding and storing vessels and the procedures for the release of personal property from the vessel.

1. LEGAL ISSUES

Los Angeles County code of ordinances, Title 19 - Chapter 19.12. – Harbors - Part 6 Anchoring, Mooring and Security of vessels, 19.12.1070 A. (If any unattended vessel shall be found to be anchored or moored illegally within a county harbor, waterway, or maritime facility, or if the harbor master has reasonable grounds to believe that a vessel has been abandoned within a county harbor, waterway or maritime facility, the harbor master may assume custody of such vessel and cause it to be removed and held or placed in storage. The harbor master shall not be held liable for any damage to such vessel, nor liable to its owners before or after assuming custody.)

2. CIVIL ACTIONS AND LIENS

2023 California Code - Harbors and Navigation Code – Division 3 – Vessels - Chapter 2 - Civil Actions and Liens - Article 4 - Boaters Lien Law Section 509:

No lien shall attach to any personal property in or on the vessel except that which is carried on the vessel for lifesaving, safety, mooring, and operating purposes. Personal property not subject to lien shall be given to the registered owner or the owner's authorized agent upon demand.

3. BOAT CREW RESPONSIBILITIES

When towing a vessel due to a time violation (either the 4 hour or 15-minute laws), boat personnel should include, on the vessel impound report and citation, what times they observed the vessel in violation of the law.

When an owner of an impounded or stored vessel request to retrieve personal property from their vessel, the harbormaster should schedule the retravel and oversee the release of the property. The Harbormaster's Office should instruct the owner to fill out the vessel impound release form and review the proof of ownership documents (registration/USCG Documented vessel) to verify ownership. Once ownership is verified, the on-duty boat crew will escort the owner of the vessel to the docks and provide a reasonable time (approximately 15 minutes) for them to retrieve essential property.

The hours to retrieve property from stored or impounded vessels are during regular business hours (8am - 5pm) Monday - Friday, excluding holidays.

Exceptions to the time constraints for property retrieval may be made by the Watch Commander on a case-by-case basis.

4. DESK CREW RESPONSIBILITIES

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When a citizen at the front counter requests to retrieve their personal items from an impounded vessel, the desk personnel should summon the on-duty boat crew to meet with the boat owner to accomplish this task, after the proof of ownership was verified.
