

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
SESSION 2003**

**SESSION LAW 2003-310  
HOUSE BILL 1140**

AN ACT TO AUTHORIZE THE QUICK REMOVAL OF VEHICLES, CARGO, OR OTHER PERSONAL PROPERTY FROM CONTROLLED-ACCESS HIGHWAYS AND TO ALLOW DRIVERS TO REMOVE VEHICLES FROM TRAVEL LANES OF A HIGHWAY FOLLOWING MINOR ACCIDENTS, IF THE VEHICLES CAN BE SAFELY MOVED.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

**SECTION 1.** G.S. 20-161 reads as rewritten:

**"§ 20-161. Stopping on highway prohibited; warning signals; removal of vehicles from public highway.**

(a) No person shall park or leave standing any vehicle, whether attended or unattended, upon the paved or main-traveled portion of any highway or highway bridge outside municipal corporate limits unless the vehicle is disabled to such an extent that it is impossible to avoid stopping and temporarily leaving the vehicle upon the paved or main traveled portion of the highway or highway bridge.

(b) No person shall park or leave standing any vehicle upon the shoulder of a public highway outside municipal corporate limits unless the vehicle can be clearly seen by approaching drivers from a distance of 200 feet in both directions and does not obstruct the normal movement of traffic.

(c) The operator of any truck, truck tractor, trailer or semitrailer which is disabled upon any portion of the highway shall display warning devices of a type and in a manner as required under the rules and regulations of the United States Department of Transportation as adopted by the Division of Motor Vehicles. Such warning devices shall be displayed as long as the vehicle is disabled.

(d) The owner of any vehicle parked or left standing in violation of law shall be deemed to have appointed any investigating law-enforcement officer his agent:

- (1) For the purpose of removing the vehicle to the shoulder of the highway or to some other suitable place; and
- (2) For the purpose of arranging for the transportation and safe storage of any vehicle which is interfering with the regular flow of traffic or which otherwise constitutes a hazard, in which case the officer shall be deemed a legal possessor of the vehicle within the meaning of G.S. 44A-2(d).

(e) When any vehicle is parked or left standing upon the right-of-way of a public highway for a period of 48 hours or more, the owner shall be deemed to have appointed any investigating law-enforcement officer his agent for the purpose of arranging for the transportation and safe storage of such vehicle and such investigating law-enforcement officer shall be deemed a legal possessor of the motor vehicle within the meaning of that term as it appears in G.S. 44A-2(d).

(f) Any investigating law enforcement officer, with the concurrence of the Department of Transportation, may immediately remove or cause to be removed from a controlled-access highway any wrecked, abandoned, disabled, unattended, burned, or partially dismantled vehicle, cargo, or other personal property interfering with the regular flow of traffic or which otherwise constitutes a hazard. In the event of a motor vehicle crash involving serious personal injury or death, no removal shall occur until the

investigating law enforcement officer determines that adequate information has been obtained for preparation of a crash report. No state or local law enforcement officer, Department of Transportation employee, or person or firm contracting or assisting in the removal or disposition of any such vehicle, cargo, or other personal property shall be held criminally or civilly liable for any damage or economic injury related to carrying out or enforcing the provisions of this section.

(g) The owner shall be liable for any costs incurred in the removal, storage, and subsequent disposition of a vehicle, cargo, or other personal property under the authority of this section."

**SECTION 2.** G.S. 20-166 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

"(c2) If an accident or collision occurs on a main lane, ramp, shoulder, median, or adjacent area of a highway, each vehicle shall be moved as soon as possible out of the travel lane and onto the shoulder or to a designated accident investigation site to complete the requirements of this section and minimize interference with traffic if all of the following apply:

- (1) The accident or collision has not resulted in injury or death to any person or the drivers did not know or have reason to know of any injury or death.
- (2) Each vehicle can be normally and safely driven. For purposes of this subsection, a vehicle can be normally and safely driven if it does not require towing and can be operated under its own power and in its usual manner, without additional damage or hazard to the vehicle, other traffic, or the roadway."

**SECTION 3.** This act becomes effective October 1, 2003.

In the General Assembly read three times and ratified this the 30<sup>th</sup> day of June, 2003.

s/ Beverly E. Perdue  
President of the Senate

s/ Richard T. Morgan  
Speaker of the House of Representatives

s/ Michael F. Easley  
Governor

Approved 11:25 a.m. this 10<sup>th</sup> day of July, 2003