

**§ 15-11.2. Disposition of unclaimed firearms not confiscated or seized as trial evidence.**

(a) Definition. – For purposes of this section, the term "unclaimed firearm" means a firearm that is found or received by a law enforcement agency and that remains unclaimed by the person who may be entitled to it for a period of 30 days after the publication of the notice required by subsection (b) of this section. The term does not include a firearm that is seized and disposed of pursuant to G.S. 15-11.1 or a firearm that is confiscated and disposed of pursuant to G.S. 14-269.1.

(b) Published Notice of Unclaimed Firearm. – When a law enforcement agency finds or receives a firearm and the firearm remains unclaimed for a period of 180 days, the agency shall publish at least one notice in a newspaper published in the county in which the agency is located. The notice shall include all of the following:

- (1) A statement that the firearm is unclaimed and is in the custody of the law enforcement agency.
- (2) A statement that the firearm may be sold or otherwise disposed of unless the firearm is claimed within 30 days of the date of the publication of the notice.
- (3) A brief description of the firearm and any other information that the chief or head of the law enforcement agency may consider necessary or advisable to reasonably inform the public about the firearm.

(c) If the firearm remains unclaimed for a period of 30 days after the publication of the notice, then the person who found the firearm and turned it over to the law enforcement agency may claim the firearm provided the person satisfies the custodial law enforcement agency holding the firearm that the person is qualified under State and federal law to possess the firearm and also presents a pistol permit issued in accordance with Article 52A of Chapter 14 of the General Statutes.

(d) If the firearm remains unclaimed for a period of 30 days after the publication of the notice and the person who found the firearm does not claim it as provided by subsection (c) of this section, then the head or chief of the law enforcement agency may apply to the appropriate district court for an order of disposition of the unclaimed firearm. The application shall be written.

(e) Disposition of Firearm. – The judge, after hearing, may order the disposition of the firearm in one of the following ways:

- (1) By ordering the firearm turned over to be destroyed by the sheriff of the county in which the law enforcement agency applying for the order of disposition is located or by the sheriff's duly authorized agent. The sheriff shall maintain a record of the destruction of the firearm.
- (2) By ordering the firearm turned over to the law enforcement agency applying for the disposition of the firearm for (i) the official use of the agency or (ii) sale, trade, or exchange by the agency to a federally licensed firearm dealer in accordance with all applicable State and federal firearm laws. The court may order a disposition of the firearm pursuant to this subsection only if the firearm has a legible, unique identification number.

(f) Disbursement of Proceeds of Sale. – If the law enforcement agency sells the firearm, then the proceeds of the sale shall be retained by the law enforcement agency and used for law enforcement purposes. The receiving law enforcement agency shall maintain a record and inventory of all firearms received pursuant to this section. (2005-287, s. 2.)