



Ohio Revised Code

Section 2923.16 Improperly handling firearms in a motor vehicle.

Effective: June 13, 2022

Legislation: Senate Bill 215

(A) No person shall knowingly discharge a firearm while in or on a motor vehicle.

(B) No person shall knowingly transport or have a loaded firearm in a motor vehicle in such a manner that the firearm is accessible to the operator or any passenger without leaving the vehicle.

(C) No person shall knowingly transport or have a firearm in a motor vehicle, unless the person may lawfully possess that firearm under applicable law of this state or the United States, the firearm is unloaded, and the firearm is carried in one of the following ways:

(1) In a closed package, box, or case;

(2) In a compartment that can be reached only by leaving the vehicle;

(3) In plain sight and secured in a rack or holder made for the purpose;

(4) If the firearm is at least twenty-four inches in overall length as measured from the muzzle to the part of the stock furthest from the muzzle and if the barrel is at least eighteen inches in length, either in plain sight with the action open or the weapon stripped, or, if the firearm is of a type on which the action will not stay open or which cannot easily be stripped, in plain sight.

(D) No person shall knowingly transport or have a loaded handgun in a motor vehicle if, at the time of that transportation or possession, any of the following applies:

(1) The person is under the influence of alcohol, a drug of abuse, or a combination of them.

(2) The person's whole blood, blood serum or plasma, breath, or urine contains a concentration of alcohol, a listed controlled substance, or a listed metabolite of a controlled substance prohibited for persons operating a vehicle, as specified in division (A) of section 4511.19 of the Revised Code,



regardless of whether the person at the time of the transportation or possession as described in this division is the operator of or a passenger in the motor vehicle.

(E) No person who has been issued a concealed handgun license or who is an active duty member of the armed forces of the United States and is carrying a valid military identification card and documentation of successful completion of firearms training that meets or exceeds the training requirements described in division (G)(1) of section 2923.125 of the Revised Code, who is the driver or an occupant of a motor vehicle that is stopped as a result of a traffic stop or a stop for another law enforcement purpose or is the driver or an occupant of a commercial motor vehicle that is stopped by an employee of the motor carrier enforcement unit for the purposes defined in section 5503.34 of the Revised Code, and who is transporting or has a loaded handgun in the motor vehicle or commercial motor vehicle in any manner, shall do any of the following:

- (1) Before or at the time a law enforcement officer asks if the person is carrying a concealed handgun, knowingly fail to disclose that the person then possesses or has a loaded handgun in the motor vehicle, provided that it is not a violation of this division if the person fails to disclose that fact to an officer during the stop and the person already has notified another officer of that fact during the same stop;
- (2) Before or at the time an employee of the motor carrier enforcement unit asks if the person is carrying a concealed handgun, knowingly fail to disclose that the person then possesses or has a loaded handgun in the commercial motor vehicle, provided that it is not a violation of this division if the person fails to disclose that fact to an employee of the unit during the stop and the person already has notified another employee of the unit of that fact during the same stop;
- (3) Knowingly fail to remain in the motor vehicle while stopped or knowingly fail to keep the person's hands in plain sight at any time after any law enforcement officer begins approaching the person while stopped and before the law enforcement officer leaves, unless the failure is pursuant to and in accordance with directions given by a law enforcement officer;
- (4) Knowingly have contact with the loaded handgun by touching it with the person's hands or fingers in the motor vehicle at any time after the law enforcement officer begins approaching and before the law enforcement officer leaves, unless the person has contact with the loaded handgun



pursuant to and in accordance with directions given by the law enforcement officer;

(5) Knowingly disregard or fail to comply with any lawful order of any law enforcement officer given while the motor vehicle is stopped, including, but not limited to, a specific order to the person to keep the person's hands in plain sight.

(F)(1) Divisions (A), (B), (C), and (E) of this section do not apply to any of the following:

(a) An officer, agent, or employee of this or any other state or the United States, or a law enforcement officer, when authorized to carry or have loaded or accessible firearms in motor vehicles and acting within the scope of the officer's, agent's, or employee's duties;

(b) Any person who is employed in this state, who is authorized to carry or have loaded or accessible firearms in motor vehicles, and who is subject to and in compliance with the requirements of section 109.801 of the Revised Code, unless the appointing authority of the person has expressly specified that the exemption provided in division (F)(1)(b) of this section does not apply to the person.

(2) Division (A) of this section does not apply to a person if all of the following circumstances apply:

(a) The person discharges a firearm from a motor vehicle at a coyote or groundhog, the discharge is not during the deer gun hunting season as set by the chief of the division of wildlife of the department of natural resources, and the discharge at the coyote or groundhog, but for the operation of this section, is lawful.

(b) The motor vehicle from which the person discharges the firearm is on real property that is located in an unincorporated area of a township and that either is zoned for agriculture or is used for agriculture.

(c) The person owns the real property described in division (F)(2)(b) of this section, is the spouse or a child of another person who owns that real property, is a tenant of another person who owns that real property, or is the spouse or a child of a tenant of another person who owns that real property.

(d) The person does not discharge the firearm in any of the following manners:



- (i) While under the influence of alcohol, a drug of abuse, or alcohol and a drug of abuse;
 - (ii) In the direction of a street, highway, or other public or private property used by the public for vehicular traffic or parking;
 - (iii) At or into an occupied structure that is a permanent or temporary habitation;
 - (iv) In the commission of any violation of law, including, but not limited to, a felony that includes, as an essential element, purposely or knowingly causing or attempting to cause the death of or physical harm to another and that was committed by discharging a firearm from a motor vehicle.
- (3) Division (A) of this section does not apply to a person if all of the following apply:
- (a) The person possesses a valid all-purpose vehicle permit issued under section 1533.103 of the Revised Code by the chief of the division of wildlife.
 - (b) The person discharges a firearm at a wild quadruped or game bird as defined in section 1531.01 of the Revised Code during the open hunting season for the applicable wild quadruped or game bird.
 - (c) The person discharges a firearm from a stationary all-purpose vehicle as defined in section 1531.01 of the Revised Code from private or publicly owned lands or from a motor vehicle that is parked on a road that is owned or administered by the division of wildlife.
 - (d) The person does not discharge the firearm in any of the following manners:
 - (i) While under the influence of alcohol, a drug of abuse, or alcohol and a drug of abuse;
 - (ii) In the direction of a street, a highway, or other public or private property that is used by the public for vehicular traffic or parking;
 - (iii) At or into an occupied structure that is a permanent or temporary habitation;



(iv) In the commission of any violation of law, including, but not limited to, a felony that includes, as an essential element, purposely or knowingly causing or attempting to cause the death of or physical harm to another and that was committed by discharging a firearm from a motor vehicle.

(4) Divisions (B) and (C) of this section do not apply to a person if all of the following circumstances apply:

(a) At the time of the alleged violation of either of those divisions, the person is the operator of or a passenger in a motor vehicle.

(b) The motor vehicle is on real property that is located in an unincorporated area of a township and that either is zoned for agriculture or is used for agriculture.

(c) The person owns the real property described in division (F)(4)(b) of this section, is the spouse or a child of another person who owns that real property, is a tenant of another person who owns that real property, or is the spouse or a child of a tenant of another person who owns that real property.

(d) The person, prior to arriving at the real property described in division (F)(4)(b) of this section, did not transport or possess a firearm in the motor vehicle in a manner prohibited by division (B) or (C) of this section while the motor vehicle was being operated on a street, highway, or other public or private property used by the public for vehicular traffic or parking.

(5) Divisions (B) and (C) of this section do not apply to a person who transports or possesses a handgun in a motor vehicle if, at the time of that transportation or possession, both of the following apply:

(a) The person transporting or possessing the handgun has been issued a concealed handgun license that is valid at the time in question or the person is an active duty member of the armed forces of the United States and is carrying a valid military identification card and documentation of successful completion of firearms training that meets or exceeds the training requirements described in division (G)(1) of section 2923.125 of the Revised Code.

(b) The person transporting or possessing the handgun is not knowingly in a place described in



division (B) of section 2923.126 of the Revised Code.

(6) Divisions (B) and (C) of this section do not apply to a person if all of the following apply:

(a) The person possesses a valid all-purpose vehicle permit issued under section 1533.103 of the Revised Code by the chief of the division of wildlife.

(b) The person is on or in an all-purpose vehicle as defined in section 1531.01 of the Revised Code or a motor vehicle during the open hunting season for a wild quadruped or game bird.

(c) The person is on or in an all-purpose vehicle as defined in section 1531.01 of the Revised Code on private or publicly owned lands or on or in a motor vehicle that is parked on a road that is owned or administered by the division of wildlife.

(7) Nothing in this section prohibits or restricts a person from possessing, storing, or leaving a firearm in a locked motor vehicle that is parked in the state underground parking garage at the state capitol building or in the parking garage at the Riffe center for government and the arts in Columbus, if the person's transportation and possession of the firearm in the motor vehicle while traveling to the premises or facility was not in violation of division (A), (B), (C), (D), or (E) of this section or any other provision of the Revised Code.

(G)(1) The affirmative defenses authorized in divisions (D)(1) and (2) of section 2923.12 of the Revised Code are affirmative defenses to a charge under division (B) or (C) of this section that involves a firearm other than a handgun.

(2) It is an affirmative defense to a charge under division (B) or (C) of this section of improperly handling firearms in a motor vehicle that the actor transported or had the firearm in the motor vehicle for any lawful purpose and while the motor vehicle was on the actor's own property, provided that this affirmative defense is not available unless the person, immediately prior to arriving at the actor's own property, did not transport or possess the firearm in a motor vehicle in a manner prohibited by division (B) or (C) of this section while the motor vehicle was being operated on a street, highway, or other public or private property used by the public for vehicular traffic.



(H)(1) No person who is charged with a violation of division (B), (C), or (D) of this section shall be required to obtain a concealed handgun license as a condition for the dismissal of the charge.

(2)(a) If a person is convicted of, was convicted of, pleads guilty to, or has pleaded guilty to a violation of division (E) of this section as it existed prior to September 30, 2011, and the conduct that was the basis of the violation no longer would be a violation of division (E) of this section on or after September 30, 2011, or if a person is convicted of, was convicted of, pleads guilty to, or has pleaded guilty to a violation of division (E)(1) or (2) of this section as it existed prior to the effective date of this amendment, the person may file an application under section 2953.37 of the Revised Code requesting the expungement of the record of conviction.

If a person is convicted of, was convicted of, pleads guilty to, or has pleaded guilty to a violation of division (B) or (C) of this section as the division existed prior to September 30, 2011, and if the conduct that was the basis of the violation no longer would be a violation of division (B) or (C) of this section on or after September 30, 2011, due to the application of division (F)(5) of this section as it exists on and after September 30, 2011, the person may file an application under section 2953.37 of the Revised Code requesting the expungement of the record of conviction.

(b) The attorney general shall develop a public media advisory that summarizes the expungement procedure established under section 2953.37 of the Revised Code and the offenders identified in division (H)(2)(a) of this section and those identified in division (E)(2) of section 2923.12 of the Revised Code who are authorized to apply for the expungement. Within thirty days after September 30, 2011, with respect to violations of division (B), (C), or (E) of this section as they existed prior to that date, and within thirty days after the effective date of this amendment with respect to a violation of division (E)(1) or (2) of this section or division (B)(1) of section 2923.12 of the Revised Code as they existed prior to the effective date of this amendment, the attorney general shall provide a copy of the advisory to each daily newspaper published in this state and each television station that broadcasts in this state. The attorney general may provide the advisory in a tangible form, an electronic form, or in both tangible and electronic forms.

(I) Whoever violates this section is guilty of improperly handling firearms in a motor vehicle. A violation of division (A) of this section is a felony of the fourth degree. A violation of division (C) of this section is a misdemeanor of the fourth degree. A violation of division (D) of this section is a



felony of the fifth degree or, if the loaded handgun is concealed on the person's person, a felony of the fourth degree. A violation of division (E)(1) or (2) of this section is a misdemeanor of the second degree. A violation of division (E)(4) of this section is a felony of the fifth degree. A violation of division (E)(3) or (5) of this section is a misdemeanor of the first degree or, if the offender previously has been convicted of or pleaded guilty to a violation of division (E)(3) or (5) of this section, a felony of the fifth degree. In addition to any other penalty or sanction imposed for a misdemeanor violation of division (E)(3) or (5) of this section, the offender's concealed handgun license shall be suspended pursuant to division (A)(2) of section 2923.128 of the Revised Code. A violation of division (B) of this section is a felony of the fourth degree.

(J) If a law enforcement officer stops a motor vehicle for a traffic stop or any other purpose, if any person in the motor vehicle surrenders a firearm to the officer, either voluntarily or pursuant to a request or demand of the officer, and if the officer does not charge the person with a violation of this section or arrest the person for any offense, the person is not otherwise prohibited by law from possessing the firearm, and the firearm is not contraband, the officer shall return the firearm to the person at the termination of the stop. If a court orders a law enforcement officer to return a firearm to a person pursuant to the requirement set forth in this division, division (B) of section 2923.163 of the Revised Code applies.

(K) As used in this section:

(1) "Motor vehicle," "street," and "highway" have the same meanings as in section 4511.01 of the Revised Code.

(2) "Occupied structure" has the same meaning as in section 2909.01 of the Revised Code.

(3) "Agriculture" has the same meaning as in section 519.01 of the Revised Code.

(4) "Tenant" has the same meaning as in section 1531.01 of the Revised Code.

(5)(a) "Unloaded" means, with respect to a firearm other than a firearm described in division (K)(6) of this section, that no ammunition is in the firearm in question, no magazine or speed loader containing ammunition is inserted into the firearm in question, and one of the following applies:



(i) There is no ammunition in a magazine or speed loader that is in the vehicle in question and that may be used with the firearm in question.

(ii) Any magazine or speed loader that contains ammunition and that may be used with the firearm in question is stored in a compartment within the vehicle in question that cannot be accessed without leaving the vehicle or is stored in a container that provides complete and separate enclosure.

(b) For the purposes of division (K)(5)(a)(ii) of this section, a "container that provides complete and separate enclosure" includes, but is not limited to, any of the following:

(i) A package, box, or case with multiple compartments, as long as the loaded magazine or speed loader and the firearm in question either are in separate compartments within the package, box, or case, or, if they are in the same compartment, the magazine or speed loader is contained within a separate enclosure in that compartment that does not contain the firearm and that closes using a snap, button, buckle, zipper, hook and loop closing mechanism, or other fastener that must be opened to access the contents or the firearm is contained within a separate enclosure of that nature in that compartment that does not contain the magazine or speed loader;

(ii) A pocket or other enclosure on the person of the person in question that closes using a snap, button, buckle, zipper, hook and loop closing mechanism, or other fastener that must be opened to access the contents.

(c) For the purposes of divisions (K)(5)(a) and (b) of this section, ammunition held in stripper-clips or in en-bloc clips is not considered ammunition that is loaded into a magazine or speed loader.

(6) "Unloaded" means, with respect to a firearm employing a percussion cap, flintlock, or other obsolete ignition system, when the weapon is uncapped or when the priming charge is removed from the pan.

(7) "Commercial motor vehicle" has the same meaning as in division (A) of section 4506.25 of the Revised Code.



(8) "Motor carrier enforcement unit" means the motor carrier enforcement unit in the department of public safety, division of state highway patrol, that is created by section 5503.34 of the Revised Code.

(L) Divisions (K)(5)(a) and (b) of this section do not affect the authority of a person who has been issued a concealed handgun license that is valid at the time in question to have one or more magazines or speed loaders containing ammunition anywhere in a vehicle, without being transported as described in those divisions, as long as no ammunition is in a firearm, other than a handgun, in the vehicle other than as permitted under any other provision of this chapter. A person who has been issued a concealed handgun license that is valid at the time in question may have one or more magazines or speed loaders containing ammunition anywhere in a vehicle without further restriction, as long as no ammunition is in a firearm, other than a handgun, in the vehicle other than as permitted under any provision of this chapter.