



File Updated October 2019

**Montana Lien Law
Montana Code Sections
70-6-601 to 70-6-609**

70-6-602. Definitions.

As used in this part, the following definitions apply:

- (1) "Commercially reasonable sale" means a sale that:
 - (a) is conducted at the self-storage facility, offsite at another location, or on a publicly accessible website that conducts lien sales; and
 - (b) is attended or viewed by at least three persons who appear personally or online, by telephone, or by any other method.
- (2) "Default" means the failure to timely perform an obligation or duty set forth in a rental agreement or this part.
- (3) "Electronic mail" means an electronic message or an executable program or computer file that contains an image that is transmitted between two or more computers or electronic terminals. The term includes an electronic message that is transmitted within or between computer networks.
- (4) "Emergency" means a sudden, unexpected occurrence or circumstance at or near a self-storage facility that requires immediate action to avoid injury to persons or property at or near the self-storage facility. The term includes but is not limited to flood, fire, or any suspected use of the leased space for residential or other unlawful purposes.
- (5) "Last-known address" means the postal address or electronic mail address provided in a rental agreement, or the postal address or electronic mail address provided by the renter through subsequent written notice of a change of address.
- (6) "Leased space" means the individual storage space at a self-storage facility that is rented to a renter pursuant to a rental agreement.
- (7) "Operator" means the owner, operator, lessor, or sublessor of a self-storage facility or an agent or another person authorized to manage the facility or to receive rent from a renter under a rental agreement. The term does not include a warehouse operator if the warehouse operator issues a warehouse receipt, bill of lading, or other document of title for the personal property stored.

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(8) "Personal property" means movable property not affixed to land. Personal property includes but is not limited to goods, wares, merchandise, motor vehicles, and other titled or otherwise registered vehicles or property.

(9) "Property that has no commercial value" means property offered for sale in a commercially reasonable sale that receives no bid or offer.

(10) "Rental agreement" means a written agreement or lease that establishes or modifies the terms, conditions, or rules concerning the use and occupancy of a leased space at a self-storage facility.

(11) "Renter" means a person entitled to the use of a leased space at a self-storage facility under a rental agreement or the person's successors or assigns.

(12) "Self-storage facility" means real property consisting of individual storage spaces in which a renter customarily stores and removes personal property on a self-service basis.

(13) "Verified mail" means:

(a) a method of mailing that is offered by the United States postal service or private delivery service and provides evidence of mailing; or

(b) a method of mailing that is accompanied by a certificate of mailing executed by the individual who caused the notice to be mailed.

70-6-603. Self-storage use – prohibition on residential or other unlawful purposes.

(1) An operator may not knowingly permit a leased space at a self-storage facility to be used for residential purposes.

(2) A renter may not use a leased space for residential or other unlawful purposes.

70-6-604. Operator inspection -- repair -- emergency.

(1) An operator must notify the renter by telephone, regular mail, or electronic mail at least 3 days before entering a leased space for the purpose of inspection or repair. An operator shall disclose to the renter the nature of the inspection or repair.

(2) In the event of an emergency, an operator may enter a leased space for inspection or repair without notice to or consent from the renter. An operator who enters a leased space in the event of an emergency shall notify the renter by telephone, regular mail, or electronic mail within 48 hours after the incident:

(a) that the operator entered the leased space; and

- (b) of the nature of the emergency.
- (3) An operator shall maintain a record of instances of entering a leased space for inspection, repair, or emergency.
- (4) A notice sent by regular mail is considered delivered when postmarked and properly addressed with postage paid. A notice sent by electronic mail is considered delivered on the date the electronic mail is sent to the last-known address provided by the renter.

70-6-605. Renter's personal property -- operator's lien -- rental agreement -- value of contents.

- (1) The operator of a self-storage facility shall have a lien on all of a renter's personal property located at the self-storage facility for rent, late fees, legal fees, labor, or other charges incurred pursuant to a rental agreement and for expenses incurred for preservation, sale, or disposition of the personal property. The lien established by this subsection has priority over all other liens except for liens that have been perfected and recorded on such personal property and tax liens.
- (2) The lien in subsection (1) attaches on the date that the personal property is placed in a leased space.
- (3) The rental agreement must contain a statement advising the renter:
 - (a) of the existence of the lien; and
 - (b) that personal property stored in the leased space may be sold to satisfy the lien if the renter is in default.
- (4) If the rental agreement specifies a limit on the value of personal property that the renter may store in the leased space, the limit must be deemed to be the maximum value of the personal property in the renter's leased space.

70-6-606. Renter default -- access restriction.

- (1) The operator has the right to deny the renter access to the leased space at the self-storage facility if:
 - (a) the rent or other charges due from the renter is delinquent and unpaid;
 - (b) the leased space is being used for residential or other unlawful purposes; or
 - (c) the renter fails to vacate the leased space after the rental agreement is terminated in accordance with its terms.
- (2) A reasonable late fee may be imposed and collected by an operator for each period that a renter does not pay rent or other charges when due under the rental agreement, if the amount of the late fee

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and the conditions for imposing the fee are stated in the rental agreement or in an addendum to that agreement. A late fee of \$20 or 20% of the monthly rent, whichever is greater, is a reasonable fee and may not be considered a penalty. Any reasonable expense incurred as a result of rent collection or lien enforcement by an operator may be charged to the renter in addition to late fees.

(3) A renter who purposely or knowingly accesses a leased space after having been in default of the rental agreement and denied access under subsection (1) may be prosecuted under Title 45, chapter 6.

70-6-607. Renter default -- personal property sale.

(1) If a renter is in default for a period of more than 60 days, the operator may enforce the lien provided in [70-6-605](#) by selling the renter's stored personal property at a commercially reasonable sale. Personal property may be sold:

- (a) as a unit or in parcels; or
- (b) by way of one or more contracts.

(2) The operator may otherwise dispose of property that has no commercial value.

(3) Before conducting a sale under this section, the operator shall:

(a) at least 30 days before the sale, send notice of default to the renter. The notice of default must include:

(i) a statement that the contents of the renter's leased space are subject to the operator's lien;

(ii) a statement of the operator's claim, indicating the charges due on the date of the notice and that additional charges shall continue to accrue and become due;

(iii) a demand for payment of the charges due and a deadline for payment;

(iv) a statement that unless the claim is paid before the deadline, the contents of the renter's leased space will be sold or otherwise disposed of after a specified time; and

(v) the name, street address, and telephone number of the operator or a designated agent that the renter may contact to respond to the notice.

(b) at least 7 days before the sale, notify by verified mail or electronic mail, if provided by the renter, the date, time, and location of the sale;

(c) at least 7 days before the sale, advertise the time, place, and terms of the sale in a newspaper of general circulation in the county where the sale is to be held. Alternatively, the operator

may advertise the sale in any other commercially reasonable manner. The manner of advertisement is commercially reasonable if the sale is attended or viewed by at least three persons who appear personally or online, by telephone, or by any other method at the time and place advertised.

(4) If the personal property subject to the operator's lien is titled, registered, or owned by public record and if charges or rent remain unpaid for 60 days, the operator may have the personal property removed from the self-storage facility by a professional transfer or tow truck company, including but not limited to motor vehicles, watercraft, aircraft, and trailers. The operator is not liable for any damage to personal property under this subsection after the professional transfer or tow truck company takes possession of the property.

(5) At any time before a sale is held under this section or before a vehicle, watercraft, aircraft, or trailer is removed under this section, the renter may pay the amount necessary to satisfy the lien and access the renter's personal property.

(6) If a sale is held under this section, the operator shall:

(a) satisfy the lien with the proceeds of the sale; and

(b) send a check of the net proceeds to the renter at the renter's last-known address or to any other recorded lienholder. The operator is not liable to any party for excess proceeds paid to the renter. If the check has not been cashed after 1 year, any remaining proceeds are considered abandoned property and must be reported and paid to the department of revenue in accordance with the Uniform Unclaimed Property Act in Title 70, chapter 9, part 8.

(7) A purchaser in good faith of any personal property sold pursuant to this section to satisfy the lien granted in [70-6-605](#) takes the property free and clear of any rights of persons against whom the lien was valid, despite noncompliance by the operator with the requirements of this part.

(8) Notices to the renter under subsection (3) must be sent to the renter's last-known address by verified mail or electronic mail, if provided by the renter. Notices sent by verified mail are considered delivered when postmarked and properly addressed with postage paid. Notices sent by electronic mail are considered delivered on the date the electronic mail is sent to the last-known address provided by the renter.

(9) If the operator complies with the requirements of this section, the operator's liability:

(a) to the renter is limited to the net proceeds received from the sale of the renter's personal property until the proceeds escheat to the state according to subsection (6)(b); and

(b) to other lienholders is limited to the net proceeds received from the sale of any personal property covered by the other lienholder's lien property until the proceeds escheat to the state according to subsection (6)(b).

70-6-608. Renter's rights.

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Unless the rental agreement specifically provides otherwise and until a lien sale under [70-6-607](#), the exclusive care, custody, and control of all personal property stored in a leased space remains vested in the renter.

70-6-609. Rights of parties -- rental agreements -- compliance with Servicemembers Civil Relief Act.

(1) This part does not impair the power of the parties to a rental agreement to create rights, duties, or obligations that do not arise from this part. The rights provided to an operator by this part are in addition to all other rights provided by law to a creditor against a debtor.

(2) If the rental agreement is with a service member, the operator shall comply with all terms of the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act, 50 U.S.C. 3901, et seq.