

RCW 4.24.230 Liability for conversion of goods or merchandise from store or mercantile establishment, leaving restaurant or hotel or motel without paying—Adults, minors—Parents, guardians—Notice. (1)

An adult or emancipated minor who takes possession of any goods, wares, or merchandise displayed or offered for sale by any wholesale or retail store or other mercantile establishment without the consent of the owner or seller, and with the intention of converting such goods, wares, or merchandise to his or her own use without having paid the purchase price thereof is liable in addition to actual damages, for a penalty to the owner or seller in the amount of the retail value thereof not to exceed two thousand eight hundred fifty dollars, plus an additional penalty of not less than one hundred dollars nor more than six hundred fifty dollars, plus all reasonable attorney's fees and court costs expended by the owner or seller. A customer who orders a meal in a restaurant or other eating establishment, receives at least a portion thereof, and then leaves without paying, is subject to liability under this section. A person who shall receive any food, money, credit, lodging, or accommodation at any hotel, motel, boarding house, or lodging house, and then leaves without paying the proprietor, manager, or authorized employee thereof, is subject to liability under this section.

(2) The parent or legal guardian having the custody of an unemancipated minor who takes possession of any goods, wares, or merchandise displayed or offered for sale by any wholesale or retail store or other mercantile establishment without the consent of the owner or seller and with the intention of converting such goods, wares, or merchandise to his or her own use without having paid the purchase price thereof, is liable as a penalty to the owner or seller for the retail value of such goods, wares, or merchandise not to exceed one thousand four hundred twenty-five dollars plus an additional penalty of not less than one hundred dollars nor more than six hundred fifty dollars, plus all reasonable attorney's fees and court costs expended by the owner or seller. The parent or legal guardian having the custody of an unemancipated minor, who orders a meal in a restaurant or other eating establishment, receives at least a portion thereof, and then leaves without paying, is subject to liability under this section. The parent or legal guardian having the custody of an unemancipated minor, who receives any food, money, credit, lodging, or accommodation at any hotel, motel, boarding house, or lodging house, and then leaves without paying the proprietor, manager, or authorized employee thereof, is subject to liability under this section. For the purposes of this subsection, liability shall not be imposed upon any governmental entity, private agency, or foster parent assigned responsibility for the minor child pursuant to court order or action of the department of social and health services.

(3) Judgments and claims arising under this section may be assigned.

(4) A conviction for violation of chapter 9A.56 RCW shall not be a condition precedent to maintenance of a civil action authorized by this section.

(5) An owner or seller demanding payment of a penalty under subsection (1) or (2) of this section shall give written notice to the person or persons from whom the penalty is sought. The notice shall state:

"IMPORTANT NOTICE: The payment of any penalty demanded of you does not prevent criminal prosecution under a related criminal provision."

This notice shall be boldly and conspicuously displayed, in at least the same size type as is used in the demand, and shall be sent with the demand for payment of a penalty described in subsection (1) or (2) of this section. [2009 c 431 s 3; 1994 c 9 s 1; 1987 c 353 s 1; 1981 c 126 s 1; 1977 ex.s. c 134 s 1; 1975 1st ex.s. c 59 s 1.]

Applicability—2009 c 431: "This act applies to crimes committed on or after September 1, 2009." [2009 c 431 s 20.]

Obtaining food from restaurant without paying: RCW 19.48.110.

Property crime database, liability: RCW 4.24.340.