A new Rwandan law regulating road use outlines when vehicles can be impounded, how long they may remain in custody and the conditions under which they may be sold or auctioned.

The legislation, Law No. 014/2026 of March 6, 2026, was published in the Official Gazette on March 10 and establishes new procedures aimed at improving road safety and enforcement.

Under Article 19, the maximum period a vehicle may remain impounded is three months, starting from the date the impoundment is approved by a competent authority.

According to Article 20, impounded vehicles must be kept in designated storage areas, and owners are responsible for paying the fees associated with the impoundment.

If the vehicle is not collected within three months by the owner or a legally authorized representative, authorities may sell it at public auction after it is valued by a certified appraiser. Alternatively, the vehicle may be handed over to a licensed company authorized to dismantle it, refurbish reusable parts and remove environmentally harmful materials.

The law also allows vehicle owners to sell their impounded vehicles privately if they request permission and follow a valuation conducted by a recognized appraiser.

Authorities may lift the impoundment order if the reason for the seizure no longer exists and the owner has paid the required fees. A court may also overturn the decision upon request by the vehicle owner or their legal representative. Such complaints must be filed through an expedited procedure.

The law lists several reasons why a vehicle may be impounded. These include abandoning a vehicle on the road or roadside in a way that threatens road safety, failing to resolve issues that caused authorities to stop the vehicle from operating or failing to comply with requirements identified during a technical inspection.

Vehicles may also be impounded if they are involved in fatal traffic accidents, are not registered in the name of the buyer within the legally required period or if the owner fails to pay an administrative fine within the specified time.

Authorities may also impound a vehicle during a preliminary investigation if a driver

is found to have a blood alcohol level exceeding the legal limit.

The law also addresses driver licensing rules, traffic offenses and penalties. Drivers who refuse to take an alcohol test face fines ranging from 300,000 to 600,000 Rwandan francs and up to six months in prison.