

Part 4. Transfer of Title or Interest.

§ 20-72. Transfer by owner.

(a) Whenever the owner of a registered vehicle transfers or assigns his title or interests thereto, he shall remove the license plates. The registration card and plates shall be forwarded to the Division unless the plates are to be transferred to another vehicle as provided in G.S. 20-64. If they are to be transferred to and used with another vehicle, then the endorsed registration card and the plates shall be retained and preserved by the owner. If such registration plates are to be transferred to and used with another vehicle, then the owner shall make application to the Division for assignment of the registration plates to such other vehicle under the provisions of G.S. 20-64. Such application shall be made within 20 days after the date on which such plates are last used on the vehicle to which theretofore assigned.

(b) In order to assign or transfer title or interest in any motor vehicle registered under the provisions of this Article, the owner shall, either in the presence of a person authorized to administer oaths or in a manner that conforms to Article 40 of Chapter 66 of the General Statutes, execute an assignment and warranty of title on the reverse of the certificate of title in form approved by the Division, including in such assignment the name and address of the transferee; and no title to any motor vehicle shall pass or vest until such assignment is executed and the motor vehicle delivered to the transferee. The provisions of this section shall not apply to any foreclosure or repossession under a chattel mortgage or conditional sales contract or any judicial sale. The provisions of this subsection shall not apply to (i) any transfer to an insurer pursuant to G.S. 20-109.1(b)(2) or (ii) any transfer to a used motor vehicle dealer pursuant to G.S. 20-109.1(e1). The provisions of this subsection requiring that an assignment and warranty of title be executed in the presence of a person authorized to administer oaths shall not apply to any transfer of title to or from an insurer pursuant to G.S. 20-109.1.

When a manufacturer's statement of origin or an existing certificate of title on a motor vehicle is unavailable, a motor vehicle dealer licensed under Article 12 of this Chapter may also transfer title to a vehicle to another by certifying in writing in a sworn statement to the Division that is signed by the dealer principal, general manager, general sales manager, controller, owner, or other manager of the dealership that, to the best of the signatory's knowledge and information as of the date of the sworn certification, all prior perfected liens on the vehicle that are known or reasonably ascertainable by the signatory have been paid and that the motor vehicle dealer, despite having used reasonable diligence, was unable to obtain the vehicle's statement of origin or certificate of title. For purposes of this subsection, a dealer may certify that the dealer is unable to obtain the vehicle's statement of origin or certificate of title if the statement of origin or certificate of title has either (i) not been delivered to the dealer or (ii) has been lost or misplaced. The Division is authorized to request any information it deems necessary to transfer the vehicle and shall develop a form for this purpose. The knowing and intentional filing of a false sworn certification with the Division pursuant to this subsection shall constitute a Class H felony. A dealer principal, owner, or manager of a motor vehicle dealership who is not a signatory of the sworn certification required under this subsection may only be charged for a criminal violation for filing a false certification under this subsection by another dealership employee if the dealer principal, owner, or manager had actual knowledge of the falsity of the sworn certification at the time the sworn certification was submitted to the Division.

Any person transferring title or interest in a motor vehicle shall deliver the certificate of title duly assigned in accordance with the foregoing provision to the transferee at the time of delivering the vehicle, except when a certificate of title is unavailable as provided in this subsection or in G.S. 20-72.1, and except that where a security interest is obtained in the motor vehicle from the transferee in payment of the purchase price or otherwise, the transferor shall deliver the certificate of title to the lienholder and the lienholder shall forward the certificate of title together with the transferee's application for new title and necessary fees to the Division

within 20 days. If the title to a vehicle is unavailable and the dealer transfers the vehicle on a sworn certification pursuant to this section or G.S. 20-52.1, and the title is subsequently received or found by the dealer, the dealer shall retain a copy for its records and submit the title to the Division. Any person who delivers or accepts a certificate of title assigned in blank shall be guilty of a Class 2 misdemeanor. No person shall have a cause of action against the Division or Division contractors arising from the transfer of a vehicle by a sworn certification pursuant to this section.

The title to a salvage vehicle shall be forwarded to the Division as provided in G.S. 20-109.1, except with respect to the title of any salvage vehicle transferred pursuant to G.S. 20-109.1(b)(2) or G.S. 20-109.1(e1).

(c) When the Division finds that any person other than the registered owner of a vehicle has in his possession a certificate of title to the vehicle on which there appears an endorsement of an assignment of title but there does not appear in the assignment any designation to show the name and address of the assignee or transferee, the Division shall be authorized and empowered to seize and hold said certificate of title until the assignor whose name appears in the assignment appears before the Division to complete the execution of the assignment or until evidence satisfactory to the Division is presented to the Division to show the name and address of the transferee. (1937, c. 407, s. 36; 1947, c. 219, ss. 4, 5; 1955, c. 554, ss. 5, 6; 1961, c. 360, s. 8; c. 835, s. 8; 1963, c. 552, ss. 3, 4; 1971, c. 678; 1973, c. 1095, s. 2; 1975, c. 716, s. 5; 1993, c. 539, s. 338; 1994, Ex. Sess., c. 24, s. 14(c); 2000-182, s. 4; 2013-400, s. 2; 2018-42, s. 2(c); 2018-145, s. 4; 2019-153, s. 3; 2019-181, s. 5(b); 2020-51, s. 3(b); 2024-30, s. 13(b).)