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CHAPTER 31.

 RENTAL OF PRIVATE PASSENGER AUTOMOBILES

**SECTION 56‑31‑10.** Application of chapter.

This chapter applies to the rental of a private passenger automobile or rental vehicle from a location in this State.

**SECTION 56‑31‑20.** Definitions.

As used in this chapter:

(1) “Rental company” means a person in the business of providing private passenger automobiles or rental vehicles to the public under the terms of a rental agreement.

(2) “Renter” means a person obtaining the use of a private passenger automobile or rental vehicle from a rental company under the terms of a rental agreement.

(3) “Rental agreement” means a written agreement setting forth the terms and conditions governing the use of a private passenger automobile or rental vehicle provided by a rental company.

(4) “Damage” means a loss or damage to a rented vehicle or rental vehicle including the loss of use and costs and expenses incident to the damage, loss, and loss of use.

(5) “Private passenger automobile” or “ vehicle” means a private passenger motor vehicle including passenger vans and minivans that are intended primarily for the transport of persons.

(6) “Rental vehicle” means a truck under 26,001 pounds gross vehicle weight and used in the transportation of personal property that is rented without a driver, and is not used by the customer for business purposes, or a trailer with a gross weight of not more than 6,000 pounds.

**SECTION 56‑31‑30.** Rental rates; permitted and prohibited charges; waiver prohibited.

(A) A rental company may advertise, quote, or charge only a rental rate that includes the entire amount, except taxes, airport fees, and a mileage charge, if any, that a renter pays to rent the vehicle or rental vehicle for the period of time to which the rate applies. Airport fees must be disclosed clearly and conspicuously in all advertisements of a rental rate for an applicable location either as a specific fee or as a range of fees. Only airport fees that are remitted to the airport management entity are permitted to be separately stated and collected. The company may charge an additional fee for an item or service provided for in the rental agreement if the charge is optional for the renter. The items and services include, but are not limited to, insurance and accessories requested by the renter unless otherwise prohibited as provided in this chapter, charges incident to the renter’s optional return of the vehicle or rental vehicle to a location other than to where it was rented, and charges for refueling the vehicle or rental vehicle at the conclusion of the rental period if the renter did not return the vehicle or rental vehicle with the same amount of fuel that was in the vehicle at the beginning of the rental period. A company also may impose an additional charge based on reasonable age criteria it establishes.

(B) If a rental company delivers a vehicle or rental vehicle to a renter at a location other than where the company normally conducts its business, the company may not charge for the rental for the time before the vehicle or rental vehicle is delivered. If the company picks up a rented vehicle or rental vehicle from a renter at a location other than the location where the company normally conducts its business, the company may not charge for the rental for the time after the rental company has been notified that the vehicle or rental vehicle is available.

(C) If a rental company quotes a rental rate in a personal or computer communication or a print advertisement, it shall disclose the terms of mileage conditions relating to the rate including, but not limited to, the amount of mileage and fuel charges, the number of miles for which no charge is imposed, and a description of geographic driving limitations, if any.

(D) A waiver of the requirements of the provisions of this section is unenforceable as contrary to public policy.

**SECTION 56‑31‑40.** Violations; application for restraining order; penalties.

If the Attorney General has reasonable cause to believe that a rental company has violated a provision of this chapter and that action is needed to serve the public interest, he may apply for a restraining order in the court of common pleas of Richland County. The court may grant appropriate final injunctive relief and impose a civil penalty of not more than one thousand dollars for each violation.

**SECTION 56‑31‑50.** Surcharge on rental of private passenger motor vehicles for 31 days or less; use; reports; violations and penalties.

(A) Rental companies engaged in the business of renting private passenger motor vehicles or rental vehicles for periods of thirty‑one days or less shall collect, at the time the vehicle or rental vehicle is rented in South Carolina, a five percent surcharge in each rental contract. For purposes of this section, a vehicle or rental vehicle is rented in South Carolina if it is picked up by the renter in South Carolina. The surcharge is a sales tax subject to the provisions of this chapter and must be computed on the total amount stated in the rental agreement, except that taxes imposed by Chapter 36 of Title 12 must not be used in computing the surcharge, and the surcharge is not subject to the taxes imposed by Chapter 36 of Title 12.

(B) The surcharge must be noted in the rental contract and collected in accordance with the terms of the contract. The surcharges must be retained by the vehicle owner, rental vehicle owner, or the rental company engaged in the business of renting private passenger motor vehicles or rental vehicles. The surcharges must be placed in a segregated account by the vehicle owner, rental vehicle owner, or rental company once they are collected. Surcharges collected belong to the State and are not subject to creditor liens of the vehicle owner, rental vehicle owner, or rental company. Surcharges collected pursuant to this section may be used only by the vehicle owner, rental vehicle owner, or the rental company for reimbursement of the amount of personal property taxes imposed and paid upon these vehicles by the vehicle owner, rental vehicle owner, or rental company as provided by law. The collection and use of the surcharges are not gross receipts or revenue to the vehicle owner, rental vehicle owner, or rental company. A person or entity may not impose a fee, penalty, or expense on a vehicle owner, rental vehicle owner, or rental company for complying with the provisions contained in this chapter.

(C) On February fifteenth of each year all rental companies engaged in the business of renting private passenger motor vehicles or rental vehicles which collect surcharges pursuant to this section shall file a report with the Department of Revenue stating the total amount of South Carolina personal property taxes on private passenger motor vehicles or rental vehicles paid in the previous calendar year, the total amount of private passenger motor vehicle rental or rental vehicle revenues earned on rentals in South Carolina for the previous calendar year, and the amount by which the total amount of the surcharges for the previous year exceeds the total amount of personal property taxes on private passenger motor vehicles or rental vehicles paid for the previous calendar year. All surcharge revenues collected in excess of the total amount of personal property taxes on private passenger motor vehicles or rental vehicles must be remitted to the Department of Revenue’s office for deposit in the state general fund.

(D) Any rental company which makes a false report to the Department of Revenue with the intent to misrepresent the amount of personal property taxes on private passenger motor vehicles or rental vehicles paid or the amount of surcharges collected is guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction, must be punished by a fine not exceeding one thousand dollars or by a term of imprisonment not exceeding one year, or both. Each violation constitutes a separate offense.