

**N.J. Stat. § 2C:20-8**

Current through New Jersey 220th Second Annual Session, L. 2023, c. 280 and J.R. 18

*LexisNexis® New Jersey Annotated Statutes > Title 2C. The New Jersey Code of Criminal Justice (Subts. 1 — 3) > Subtitle 2. Specific Offenses (Pts. 1 — 6) > Part 2. Offenses Against Property (Chs. 17 — 23) > Chapter 20. Theft (§§ 2C:20-1 — 2C:20-39) > I. General Provisions (§§ 2C:20-1 — 2C:20-22)*

**§ 2C:20-8. Theft of services**

---

- a.** A person is guilty of theft if he purposely obtains services which he knows are available only for compensation, by deception or threat, or by false token, slug, or other means, including but not limited to mechanical or electronic devices or through fraudulent statements, to avoid payment for the service. “Services” include labor or professional service; transportation, telephone, telecommunications, electric, water, gas, cable television, or other public service; accommodation in hotels, restaurants or elsewhere; entertainment; admission to exhibitions; use of vehicles or other movable property. Where compensation for service is ordinarily paid immediately upon the rendering of such service, as in the case of hotels and restaurants, absconding without payment or offer to pay gives rise to a presumption that the service was obtained by deception as to intention to pay.
- b.** A person commits theft if, having control over the disposition of services of another, to which he is not entitled, he knowingly diverts such services to his own benefit or to the benefit of another not entitled thereto.
- c.** Any person who, without permission and for the purpose of obtaining electric current, gas or water with intent to defraud any vendor of electricity, gas or water or a person who is furnished by a vendor with electric current, gas or water:
- (1)** Connects or causes to be connected by wire or any other device with the wires, cables or conductors of any such vendor or any other person; or
  - (2)** Connects or disconnects the meters, pipes or conduits of such vendor or any other person or in any other manner tampers or interferes with such meters, pipes or conduits, or connects with such meters, pipes or conduits by pipes, conduits or other instruments—is guilty of a disorderly persons offense.

The existence of any of the conditions with reference to meters, pipes, conduits or attachments, described in this subsection, is presumptive evidence that the person to whom gas, electricity or water is at the time being furnished by or through such meters, pipes, conduits or attachments has, with intent to defraud, created or caused to be created with reference to such meters, pipes, conduits or attachments, the condition so existing; provided, however, that the presumption shall not apply to any person so furnished with gas, electricity or water for less than 31 days or until there has been at least one meter reading.

A violation of this subsection shall be deemed to be a continuing offense as long as the conditions described in this subsection exist.

**d.** Any person who, without permission or authority, connects or causes to be connected by wires or other devices, any meter erected or set up for the purpose of registering or recording the amount of electric current supplied to any customer by any vendor of electricity within this State, or changes or shunts the wiring leading to or from any such meter, or by any device, appliance or means whatsoever tampers with any such meter so that the meter will not measure or record the full amount of electric current supplied to such customer, is guilty of a disorderly persons offense.

The existence of any of the conditions with reference to meters or attachments described in this subsection is presumptive evidence that the person to whom electricity is at the time being furnished by or through such meters or attachments has, with intent to defraud, created or caused to be created with reference to such meters or attachments, the condition so existing; provided, however, that the presumption shall not apply to any person so furnished with electricity for less than 31 days or until there has been at least one meter reading.

A violation of this subsection shall be deemed to be a continuing offense as long as the conditions described in this subsection exist.

**e.** Any person who, with intent to obtain cable television service without payment, in whole or in part, of the lawful charges therefor, or with intent to deprive another of the lawful receipt of such service, damages, cuts, tampers with, installs, taps or makes any connection with, or who displaces, removes, injures or destroys any wire, cable, conduit, apparatus or equipment of a cable television company operating a CATV system; or who, without authority of a cable television company, intentionally prevents, obstructs or delays, by any means or contrivance, the sending, transmission, conveyance, distribution or receipt of programming material carried by equipment of the cable television company operating a CATV system, is a disorderly person.

The existence of any of the conditions with reference to wires, cables, conduits, apparatus or equipment described in this subsection is presumptive evidence that the person to whom cable television service is at the time being furnished has, with intent to obtain cable television service without authorization or compensation or to otherwise defraud, created or caused to be created the condition so existing.

**f.** Any person who purposely or knowingly manufactures, constructs, sells, offers for sale, distributes or installs any equipment, device or instrument designed or intended to facilitate the interception, decoding or receipt of any cable television service with intent to obtain such service and avoid the lawful payment of the charges therefor to the provider, in whole or in part, is a disorderly person.

Any communications paraphernalia prohibited under this subsection shall be subject to forfeiture and may be seized by the State or any law enforcement officer in accordance with the provisions of N.J.S.2C:64-1 et seq.

**g.** Any person who purposely or knowingly maintains or possesses any equipment, device or instrument of the type described in subsection f. of this section or maintains or possesses any equipment, device or instrument actually used to facilitate the interception, decoding or receipt of any cable television service with intent to obtain such service and avoid the lawful payment, in whole or in part, of the charges therefor to the provider, is a disorderly person.

**h.** Any person who, with the intent of depriving a telephone company of its lawful charges therefor, purposely or knowingly makes use of any telecommunications service by means of the unauthorized use of any electronic or mechanical device or connection, or by the unauthorized use of billing information, or by the use of a computer, computer equipment or computer software, or by the use of misidentifying or misleading information given to a representative of the telephone company is guilty of a crime of the third degree.

The existence of any of the conditions with reference to electronic or mechanical devices, computers, computer equipment or computer software described in this subsection is presumptive evidence that the person to whom telecommunications service is at the time being furnished has, with intent to obtain telecommunications service without authorization or compensation or to otherwise defraud, created or caused to be created the condition so existing.

**i.** Any person who purposely or knowingly manufactures, constructs, sells, offers for sale, distributes, installs, or otherwise provides any service, equipment, device, computer, computer equipment, computer software or instrument designed or intended to facilitate the receipt of any telecommunications service and avoid the lawful payment of the charges therefor to the provider, in whole or in part, is guilty of a crime of the third degree.

Any communications paraphernalia, computer, computer equipment or computer software prohibited under this subsection shall be subject to forfeiture and may be seized by the State or any law enforcement officer in accordance with the provisions of N.J.S.2C:64-1 et seq.

**j.** Any person who purposely or knowingly maintains or possesses any equipment, device, computer, computer equipment, computer software or instrument of the type described in subsection i. of this section, or maintains or possesses any equipment, device, computer, computer equipment, computer software or instrument actually used to facilitate the receipt of any telecommunications service with intent to obtain such service and avoid the lawful payment, in whole or in part, of the charges therefor to the provider, is guilty of a crime of the third degree.

**k.** In addition to any other disposition authorized by law, and notwithstanding the provisions of N.J.S.2C:43-3, every person who violates this section shall be sentenced to make restitution to the vendor and to pay a minimum fine of \$500.00 for each offense. In determining the amount of restitution, the court shall consider the costs expended by the vendor, including but not limited to the repair and replacement of damaged equipment, the cost of the services unlawfully obtained, investigation expenses, and attorney fees.

**l.** The presumptions of evidence applicable to offenses defined in subsections c., d., e. and h. of this section shall also apply in any prosecution for theft of services brought pursuant to the provisions of subsection a. or b. of this section.

## History

---

L. 1978, c. 95; Amended 1983, c. 15, § 1; 1985, c. 10, § 1; 1989, c. 112, § 1; 1997, c. 6, § 4.

---

End of Document